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IN GOD'S NURSERY

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BY

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And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.—Zacharias VIII. 5.

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TO

E. O.

R.

. . . Since, years ago, you (and some others) used to like me to read these stories aloud to you, perhaps you won't refuse their dedication. You used irreverently to call them, I remember, by inelegant nicknames; but even then you were never tempted to take them for archæological treatises or for sermons. And now I have stripped them of nearly all their footnotes (for they appeared first, you know, in the "Month"), and of their references to Frazer, Tylor, or Robertson Smith; to Lucian, Apuleius, or the Corpus Inscriptionum, and so on; and even to the Christian Fathers. I dare say you won't regret them. Anyhow, E. O., if you still like the stories, I can have no greater pleasure than to think of you re-reading them, "at your world's far end".

Tuissimus.

C. C. M.

YONDER.

"Tendebantque manus ripae ulterioris amore."
—VERGIL, "Æn." vi.

"I DON'T believe it," said Calpurnia the Less. And she burst into tears.

The May morning had afforded no presage of this storm. It had begun delightfully with a walk over the "Hill of Gardens," from which you saw all Rome; a favourite walk, indeed, for the way led past a certain villa where a great friend of Calpurnia's lived. This was a slave called Maccus, who looked after the cucumber beds on the terrace just above the wall, and had found it politic to establish amicable relations with that young lady, owing to those which already existed between himself and her nurse Polla. Hence he had actually shown her his mistress's tame ape, shaven in tufts, and gilded on the nose, and would give her feathers moulted by the peacocks and flamingoes and pheasants of his aviary, whereof

she made meet adornment for her wooden doll. And hence her not unnatural indignation when she found, to-day, that Maccus and Polla were so engrossed in one another's conversation that Maccus had no presents and Polla no attention to bestow upon herself. With much deliberation she accordingly withdrew—to speak of running away in connexion with this stately little Roman lady of five were an impertinence—turned quietly down one of the narrow white-walled lanes between the gardens, found a pink wooden gate just ajar, pushed it open, and climbed the stone steps behind it. Beyond the fringe of cypresses spread a fig-tree, and here, placid and composed, she established herself, and waited for the situation to develop.

This it speedily did, for down the sanded path a boy of about seven came running. He saw Calpurnia and stopped dead.

"Hercules!" said he.

"Go away, little boy," said Calpurnia the Less. "You mustn't talk to me. I don't know you."

"Then what are you doing in our garden?" asked he.

Calpurnia was so completely unprovided with an answer to this question that she took refuge in admonition.

"You ought to be at school," she said severely.

"Pax!" said the boy. "Am I a guinea-fowl to be tied by a string to a stick, and count upon my abacus, and sing my grammar, and be called Turnip—an intolerable name? Behold, then: my pappa is away: I start for school: I kick over the bun-stall: my pedagogue is paying for the damages, and turns his back: and I—I run away. See me."

The morality of Calpurnia's position was itself so doubtful that she said nothing, but pursed up her lips and sat still.

But the boy went on excitedly. "*I* made a hole in the door last night and looked through! But I couldn't see anyone but my pappa. Did you look? But you're only a girl. You wouldn't dare."

Indignation and curiosity divided Calpurnia's soul: "I don't know what you mean," she said at last; stiff, but tentative.

"The ghosts, of course," said he. "The ghost hunt." Then—for her eyes had still no answer—"Didn't you have one? Everybody does. *We* always do. . . ."

Now Calpurnia's father, in his youth, had been an impassioned admirer of Lucretius, and a sworn

enemy, in consequence, of "that fear of Acheron which, from its very roots, confoundeth human life". Hell in the future, thought he, makes hell, too, of the present. But as he aged he passed insensibly into a school of practical politics, and while obstinate in his refusal to admit the ceremonies and doctrines of orthodoxy into the "religion of the family," he was content, like a Scipio or Lucilius, to preserve the "Civil Religion" of his State *ad coërcendam plebem*—to keep the masses in order. So while Calpurnia need listen to no diatribes against the superstitions of her age, her nurses were none the less forbidden to regale her with the many and fantastic bogey-tales of Italian lore; of Lamiæ and Lemures, of vampires and of ghouls she had never heard, and had never seen the ritual that the boy now detailed to her with such greedy pleasure both in his own audacity and in the undoubted terrors of the night. She now learnt for the first time how on three nights in May[1] the master of each house would rise at midnight and pass barefooted from his room, snapping his fingers softly lest, were he silent, the vagrant ghosts should meet him and face him unawares. Then, having bathed his

[1] The 9th, 11th, and 13th.

hands in holy water, he would go down each corridor flinging black beans behind him as he went, nor ever look back. For, while he muttered, "These offer I; with these I ransom myself and mine," the hungry bloodless ghosts would follow him, snatching at the beans and devouring them. When the whole house had thus been traversed he would bathe again, and strike a gong, and nine times say: "Ye ghosts of my ancestors, go hence!" And all would be still once more.

As the boy described the grotesque, half-savage ceremony, a curious change came over the child. She grew restless, and her hands plucked at the grass. Her imagination stirred, and woke from its sleep. She could almost see the gaunt, dark figure stalking down the corridor, black in the squares of moonlight, blotted out, again, in the inky patches of shadow; hear, almost, the dry rattle of the beans on the mosaic, the sharp gasping of the ceremonial words, the reverberating bronze; above all, the scurrying and pattering of the ghosts as they shot out their cold grey arms and, with shrivelled fingers, carried the mystic food to their hideous lips. She sat still awhile, but in distress, for she had never yet known fear, and could make nothing of her state. At last she

suddenly slipped down from her seat in the fig-tree, stopped her ears, and ran off to the gate and the lane, where her bright green dress, the colour of a pistachio-nut, was soon descried by the despairing Polla, and child and nurse were locked in one another's arms.

"My honey-pot! My pigeon!" cooed the nurse, kissing Calpurnia's wrists and eyes; while Calpurnia herself poured out her story to a ready hearer.

But Polla, for all her affection, was not without an adequate regard for her own interests, and in view of the possible indignation of her master, left tears for scolding; a process which restored Calpurnia to her Roman self-possession far sooner than any embraces. But worse than this: Polla was packed with superstition, and her rebukes became interspersed with alarmist references to spooks and sprites, with ghostly reminiscences and threats, which undid all the good work of her admonitory tonic; and at last Calpurnia asserted, with tremulous indignation, that she didn't believe a word that Polla said, and that if her pappa had been there, Polla wouldn't have dared to say it.

"Your pappa will be a ghost himself, some

day!" the nurse had recklessly retorted: "and so will you."

"I don't believe it," had said Calpurnia the Less; and her tears had forthwith testified to the fact of her faith.

It was a curious freak of atavism, this sudden actualization of a latent fear on the occasion of the boy's story. It was a fear inherited from generations of her ancestors, and crystallized long since by the Roman Religion in that triduum of the Lemuria, whose name, inscribed in capitals on the old Italian calendars, bore witness to the pre-republican character of the feast. It was a fear dating from the old days when a life of violence almost habitually ended in a violent death, and when the spirit of the departed was all too naturally regarded as the relentless foe of the survivor. Yet revenge was not the only preoccupation of the unhappy ghost; its own life was so vague, so bloodless, that it would leave its tomb when it might, and seek its old haunts in quest of food and drink, and ravage the homes of the living, and even drink their blood. Hence it came that the dead were regarded as "acceptable neither 'mid gods nor men"; hence, too, that curious religion of Aversion, or Riddance, of which the

Lemuria was a noticeable example at Rome. Men offered that food to the ghosts only to prevent their further invasion of the house: "With these beans I redeem myself and mine"; just as in Greece, on the last day of the Anthesteria, when souls "would leave their dwellings," men set food in the front part of their houses, that the ghosts might see it, and fasten on it, and come no farther. Then, when evening approached, the whole family would advance, chanting "Away, ye ghosts: the festival is over". *Θύραζε, κῆρες, οὐκέτ' Ἀνθεστήρια.*

All over the world there were and are similar ceremonies: an interesting Slavonic custom "hunts out the ghosts like fleas" after their meal, while the priest cries, "Ye have eaten and drunk, ye souls; now go, now go". Beans, oddly enough, were continually connected with such superstitious rites. Pliny tells how the souls of the dead were thought to be within them; and even in Japan we find them connected with these periodical ghost-hunts. And even for some of us to-day, the glossy, dappled surface of the vegetable may have something uncanny about it, like an orchid. . . .

Official recognition, too, was given to this view

of immortality, by the pit which was dug in every new Italian town by its founders. This was called the *Mundus*, for it represented an inverted heaven in the earth, and was held to be the ingress to the kingdom of the dead. It was closed by a slab called the Lapis Manalis, and this, on 8 August, 5 October, 8 November was raised, that the inhabitants of "Orcus's Treasure-house" might have egress. True, this gloomy colouring was probably added to a simpler and even utilitarian custom by the savage and bloodthirsty religion of Etruria, with its fearful images of the Conductor of the Dead, who, with lank hair and beard, and draggled wings, and murderous mallet, marshalled the ghosts in hell: later, he was actually represented as the escort of gladiators fallen in the games, and his ghastly and brutal figure was familiar to Tertullian.

No wonder then, that it was a thing of horror that the population "Yonder"—*οἱ ἐκεῖ*—should come forth to mix with men of daylight. Hateful, yet grotesque; helpless, shadowy, timorous, yet athirst for blood, and dreadful with all the *macabre* repulsiveness of their pictures on Greek vases, no wonder that their impression was baleful to an imagination that they had touched.

And this impression grew upon Calpurnia. Polla, her lips once unsealed, was inexhaustible of ghost-lore; and her garrulity was only stopped by discovery and dismissal. But Calpurnia had suffered. She became nervous, and morbid, and secret. The new gardens of Maecenas on the Esquiline grew hateful to her; for they were on the site of the old execution ground, where slaves had been crucified and paupers buried; and the witches, who had once made the hill their home, still haunted the garden-walls and did hideous things there. But its sharp cypress-rows were a magnet to her eyes; and the Palatine Hill no less; for it was there, Polla had told her, that the Lapis Manalis of Rome was embedded. Truly, the "fear of Acheron" was flooding with blackness her life that should have been all bright colours: nay, into her very home it entered; and, in the hall, the little cedar shrines containing the wax masks of her dead ancestors became the houses of she knew not what of horrible and corpselike that lurked behind their doors, almost always closed.

So, when Uncle Ovid—a cousin of her mother's—visited the house, he found the child with pinched face and heavy eyes. Her father told

him the story, half incredulous. But the poet was touched, and gave Calpurnia all the sympathy that Court-life had not yet dried up.

"You must let her come and stay with us, Calpurnius," he said. "My little daughter will love to have her and her big sister Calpurnia in the house. We shall let her see the Parentalia, and that will give her better ideas of the Yonder-folk."

"She shall stay with you by all means," answered Calpurnius, "but the Parentalia — well, though I could spin an *aureola oratio* in defence of religion, as well as any Laelius, should the State require it,—you know how clear I keep my own house of cobwebs."

"You're wrong," said Ovid. "You can't afford to starve a natural instinct. You can't neglect what centuries have worked into the blood. As for the webs upon our altars—well, Augustus, as you know, has many brooms to his hand; but though he is sweeping away the webs, he intends to leave the altar standing. In fact," he went on, smiling, "you must have heard of the order I received lately—for the new edition of the 'Fasti,' the Calendar of Holy Days and Festivals—a most devout publication, I assure you!" and his smile grew retrospective and a trifle cynical. "*Ecquis*

ad haec illinc crederet esse viam!" he quoted from the new work, contrasting it with those earlier writings. And then he sighed.

But Calpurnius only laughed.

"I doubt whether it will be so devout as all that," said he. "The Ethiopian won't become white at will. 'Your stone is thrown.' However, I leave Calpurnia in your hands. Let her think what she likes of your celebrations. And yet—δυσέρωτες δὴ φαινόμεθ' ὄντες"—he quoted, "'mad lovers, in good faith, we prove ourselves to be of that strange thing that glitters over the earth,' if we insist that the dead are to live, and reflect our sunlight into their shadows! Rather do we bring their death into our day, and walk through life with feet entangled in a shroud." He shrugged his shoulders.

If Ovid was surprised thus to find himself the apostle of the "Yonder," he grew still more astonished as he noted the zeal and tact he put into the task. With his wife and little daughter, he would often take Calpurnia to the vault in his orchards on the Claudian Way, where some of his relatives already lay, and where he hoped to lie. But that was not to be; and not even Calpurnia's sweet influence could avert the tragedy which we

will not speak of here. The Flaminian Way, which led to the vault, and the Appian, on the other side of the city, were lined with tombs, and Ovid would read to the child the gentle, simple epitaphs; he would fulfil the wishes of the dead, who had been buried there on the high-road, for no other reason than that the passers-by might be more numerous to whisper "*Salve*"—Health to thee!—to the shade within the tomb. Few of these epitaphs were of frivolous or Epicurean tone, and these he omitted; few even of the melancholy scepticism of a decadent philosophy; for the words, *somno aeterno sacratum*—"sacred to eternal sleep,"—and the many references to "perpetual peace" were no mere witnesses to a creed of annihilation, and were to be paralleled later in many a Christian catacomb. These Ovid would read to the little girl, and with her whisper, "*Salve,*" and place flowers on lonely graves, and salute the little bands of relatives who returned each year, violets and roses in their hands, to partake of a simple meal at the tomb and in the presence of their beloved dead. Wonderfully careful were these men and women of that complicated world of all that related to their last dwelling. Bequests were made for tombs, for their upkeep, their

yearly visitation. Gardens were planted to produce the fruit for the funeral meal, the flowers for the garlands; "that from them the guardians of my tomb may for ever have a rose to offer me," says one most pathetic inscription. Nay, even slaves would buy their niche in the long subterranean columbaria; would club together to purchase a common sepulchre; would make offerings from their hard-earned *peculium* for the lamp at a friend's grave; and if (as must have happened, however, but rarely) a master refused the body of a slave for burial, his fellows would erect a cenotaph, where they might year by year observe the rites of mindful affection. At Sassina, a rich man left in his will a hundred tombs to such of his fellow-citizens as should be too poor to provide themselves with a last resting-place. And across this land was passing, like a sweet melody, the voice of Vergil, dead so short a while before; pure, solemn, and most beautiful, it made more conscious that instinctive passion for the "further shore," to which men were stretching out their hands; and to many it must have spoken of that country as it had seemed to the poet himself, the fatherland to which none could prefer the old scenes of his exile.

To be thus "in love with death" was clearly not yet the doctrine for Calpurnia to learn, nor could Ovid have taught it to her. But there rose up around her the impression of a whole world other than the visible one, peopled by the kindly, affectionate Manes, or Good People—even the Greeks had called them the Blessed and the Good; and the feeling that the family-bond was not snapped by death; that the quality of affection was not changed, but only its conditions. She was entering, in fact, into the second great sphere of "other-world" thoughts and emotions which had influenced Roman antiquity; which had long acted parallel to the more crude and savage eschatology, but had ended in softening, sobering, and cheering it.

Centuries ago, in the oldest Indo-European thought, men had held it to be impossible that the full lives of the kings and warriors they had known should altogether end at death. And to their faith the tombs of the civilizations that preceded the Greek bear eloquent witness. "Men held," said Cicero, "that the dead went on living beneath the earth." And so they would put beside their dead all that had been of use to them during their earth-life, and that should be of

use or pleasure to them during the new tomb-life beginning. The warrior's armour was placed there; toys for children; tools for labourers; and, with a pathetic logic, razors for the men, and for ladies their cosmetics. Food, too, would be placed on golden dishes near the corpse; and as thought grew more sophisticated, and the act more frankly conventional and ritualistic, the food itself would be made of metal, and the armour of rich but useless foil. The human sacrifices of friend, of wife, of slave, upon the tomb of some "king of men," are but phenomena of the times which held the dead still to have need of human comradeship and marriage; and the terra-cotta images—each carefully broken before it was tossed into the grave—mark the days when people were content to replace the actual victim by its symbol.

But at Rome the realization of the presence of the dead, in their kindlier aspect, was to culminate in the festival of the Parentalia, the All Souls' week of Rome. From the 13th to the 21st day of February, all temples were closed; the worship of the gods was set in the background; the magistrates wore no insignia of office; no marriages were celebrated. Yet the week was not one of lamentation: it was no second Lemuria. Rather was it

the dutiful, nay, cheerful observance by the law-loving Roman people of the *Ius Manium*, the law that bound them to their kinsfolk "Yonder". The City of the Living, during that week, would go in procession to the City of the Dead outside the walls; and for a while the two polities would mingle, the two worlds fuse. The State did, as a whole, what each family would do on the anniversary of its particular dead. The wine and milk, honey and water and oil, would be sprinkled; the flowers twined about the monument; the simple food partaken of by the living, and left for the dead to share. Then the prayer for Good Fortune was spoken; and after the *Salve*, the last good-bye, the procession returned. On the octave day was celebrated the feast of the *Cara Cognatio* (or, of "Our Dear Kinsfolk"), the *Caristia* (or, of "Our Dear Ones"), and the whole family met at a common meal; on that day, all feuds were to be forgotten, all enemies within the family circle to be reconciled. And to this pre-Christian agape the dead too were invited, and places set for them; and over the feast presided the statues of the Lares, the little household gods, simple and primitive and kindly, quaintly dressed for the occasion in festival attire. Thus, for at least one

day, God, the living, and the dead dwelt peaceably together in one large family.

It was this celebration that put the finishing touch to Calpurnia's cure; for the old nightmare had already been fading quickly, under the wholesome influence of Uncle Ovid's treatment—alas, poor physician, who could never heal himself! And now the climax was reached when her father promised to come, with her mother, to spend the Caristia at the poet's house on the Capitol, and that his little daughter's happiness should have no cloud, to share for the first time in the peace-meal. More than this, Ovid had a cousin who, with his son, was to come likewise to the feast. Calpurnius had, however, quarrelled with this man some years before over a business transaction, and though the two families were connected through Uncle Ovid, they had never met since. But Calpurnius made no difficulty about patching up the quarrel for this occasion, so that neither need be excluded from the sacred meal. And this is of special interest to us since this is a true story, where we must keep to facts, and no mere archæological treatise where romance is customary and justifiable. For the gentleman turned out to be none other than the father of the small boy whose

story had been the occasion of Calpurnia's fright; so that the Lemuria, by a roundabout route, led to some good after all. Indeed, Calpurnia the Less, having now been properly introduced, behaved with much graciousness to the youth (whose name was Aulus Nigidius Capito), and afterwards married him.

Yet even then her pilgrimage was not wholly at an end. "She gave her tears; let her give worship, now,"[1] Statius was to write of Lucan's widow: and years afterwards when her husband died, Calpurnia was to adore, nay, and to long to see, his spirit: so far had she departed from the terrors of her childhood. Surely it was hers, that most touching prayer which an inscription preserves to us: "I beseech you, most holy spirits of the dead, to consider my husband entrusted to your care, and be most gracious to him, that in the hours of night I may behold him, and the more sweetly and swiftly may reach to where he is".[2]

[1] "Quidquid fleuerat ante, nunc adoret" (Stat. "Silv." II. 7, 135).

[2] "Ita peto uos, Manes sanctissimi, commendatum habeatis meum coniugem, et uelitis huic indulgentissimi esse horis nocturnis ut eum uideam, et possim dulcius et celerius aput eum peruenire." ("Or. Henz." 4775).

And so she and her sisters of that age faced the dark flood of death, until it became possible for humanity, as Plato once had prayed, "to cross without danger to the farther side upon the sure bark of a divine doctrine"; and the little lamps that flickered all over the cemeteries of the pagan world went out, in the "perpetual light" that was now to shine upon the spirits "Yonder"; or else, when they survived to light Christian churchyards, as in other lands we see them, they changed their signification, and testified no longer to the presence of the spirit in the tomb, but to the mindful affection of those still living.

Nor shall we fear to salute her death-bed in the formula of that strange period when all creeds were mingling: "Courage, lady, and may Osiris give thee of the cold water to drink!"

GUARDIAN ANGELS.

"Guercino drew this Angel I saw teach
. . . that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each
Pressed gently,—with his own head turned away
Over the earth where so much lay before him
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him."

—BROWNING.

JACK was having an early breakfast in the small red dining-room which the family used when they were alone. The family consisted of his brother Rupert and Rupert's wife, Cecilia, and their small son and heir. Jack was spending a week or two of the Long Vacation with them in London. He was twenty-one years old, and Mods. were a couple of terms behind him.

The dining-room got its name from curtains of a most glorious Venetian-red damask. Not only their pattern, but the rectangular design of narrow gold braid, tarnished by time, proved their ecclesiastical origin. Cecilia, when she came to

live there, declared that she existed in daily panic of being had up for simony. The explanation of the nature of that offence in no way quieted her: she considered the Inquisition capable of anything. In the evening, electric light shone from brass chandeliers of a severe pattern; the imitation candles themselves leant this way and that at suitable ecclesiastical angles. The walls were hung with extremely rich and sombre tapestry: there were no pictures, save one, perfectly black, over the mantelpiece, and generally considered to represent an ancestor. The glass was all hand cut, and the cutlery, of antique shape, called for caution when you approached your soup.

In this austere apartment you fully expected to see a small fire of pine-cones, at one side of which should sit a Cardinal, blandly dogmatic, emphasizing with plump, emeralded finger, the points of his discourse. On the other should be stationed a Monsignore, fully occupied in agreeing to all that Eminence affirmed, his violet, however, clashing not a little with the Cardinalitial ankle.

This morning, however, Jack was alone, and, in spite of the long morning of golf he promised himself, not cheerful.

He had been re-reading the "Iliad" the day be-

fore, and had quite suddenly achieved a realization of the meaning, as a whole, of that profoundly melancholy poem; and it had struck gloom into him. Not that his emotions were original, or his appreciation in any way peculiar. Simply it was that he *did* appreciate, and feel. What struck him was, as he would have put it, the hopeless mess that the great characters had made of things, or that Paris, at least, and Helen had made for them. Paris, at any rate, was a simple personality to deal with. You might detest him *ad libitum* —the exquisite foreign dandy, the charming musician, with such lovely hair, on his visit at the Court of Menelaus! Then the seduction; the silken wooing of Helen's love from her husband, whom no doubt she found a very rough and clumsy soldier, compared to this vision of exotic grace. Then the flight back to Troy; the pursuit by the husband wronged, the host betrayed; the whole of Greece pouring out, indignant, after the Asiatic paramour. And he recollected, here, the amazing lines of Aeschylus:—

"And they that could speak for the castle made long moan, 'Ah, ah, for the house, for the house and its Lord! Ah for the marriage, for the memories of love! He stands there silent, disgraced

yet not rebuking, looking in agony after the self-divorced. And, in his longing for her that is beyond the sea, a ghost shall seem to be queen in his halls; the grace of the fair features of the statues round has grown loathsome to the man; in the famine of his eyes, all loveliness has perished. Phantoms, dreams of the night, stand at his side to grieve with him, and bring him empty solace, for empty is it when a man thinks that his eyes see good, but, in an instant, the vision is gone, slipping through his hands, on wings that follow down the path whereby sleep first had fled.'"[1]

And Helen had done it all so easily, he raged at her.

"She fared forth *lightly* through the gates [the same poet had sung], daring the deed none should have dared: she sailed forth from her delicate, costly curtains, beneath the breath of the tremendous West, herself calm in unruffled pride, the darling of exquisite wealth, with piercing-tender eye, the flower of love, the canker of hearts!"

The *silliness* of the woman, to have preferred

[1] Whether Jack would have got through Mods. on these translations may well be doubted; still, that is the impression his "Agamemnon" was making on him at this time.

Paris to Menelaus. Infatuation! That was it, the key, itself a problem, to the whole story. "I could not help it"; she would repeat afterwards, at Troy: "I was mad." And she would scorn Paris, and hate her own loveliness. But then came the gentle, modest Helen of the ramparts, watching the men whom she had left ten dreadful years ago now, besieging the town of her adoption. How utterly, and how often, she had changed since then! She recognized each face, and pointed them out to the Trojan King and the old nobles seated on the tower; but her self-reproach, quiet for all its bitterness, was not echoed by them: they had long ago forgiven her; she was like a daughter of the place; they would be sorry to lose her, should they survive the taking of the town, and should Menelaus take her back home. And indeed he did so take her, and Jack recalled that exquisite assurance of family life in the "Odyssey," where Menelaus and Helen, wise now and subdued, lived in long affection together. He found it impossible to rail at her any more, when he watched that. But there were others whose career he followed with bitterness, Achilles for instance. He had laughed heartily over the picture of the small boy, sitting on Nestor's knee

—Achilles preferred that guest "in sanctuary" even to his own father, one might believe:—

"I made thee the man thou art, O Achilles godlike [Nestor pleaded with him later], loving thee from my heart, for that never wast thou fain to go in with any other to the banquet, nor in the castle to take bite or sup till upon my knees I should have set thee down, and given thee taste of food, the first piece cut, and should hold wine to thy lips. Aye, many a time didst thou wet the jerkin on my breast, spluttering with the wine in thy weakling babyhood!"

Achilles grew up, glorious and godlike, yet never outgrew that babyhood. Always wilful, moody, stormy, fond of a way of life really too strong for him, he followed with the rest to Troy, and quarrelled with the King over the slave-girl, and sulked in his tent, and let the Greeks perish, till he consented to lend at least his armour to Patroklos,—the gentle knight, his passionately-loved comrade. And Patroklos fought, and was killed; and Achilles raved with grief, scarcely even so condemning his own folly; and fought savagely, and made butchery of heroes, and hideously killed Hector, the bulwark of Troy. And this had meant the end of that happiest of homes—Hector,

always so honourable and manly, his wife Andromache, and their little son Astyanax. Throughout, it was the thought of the *children* sacrificed by the woman's mad action that sickened Jack. The fate of the poor Princess Andromache was heart-breaking enough; but the fate of that tiny boy, flung down from the windy battlements, was what had shocked him even more. He could not forget the exquisite farewell scene; the baby, frightened at first by his father's nodding crest; the poor mother, laughing through her tears; the helmet set on the ground, and the brave good-byes. All that was so stupidly, so uselessly spoilt and broken to pieces. All for Paris's sake—the fool! the blackguard! Jack cursed healthily. And even the glorious Achilles got nothing by it. His great moody heart, sunshine and black night and lurid fury in quick succession, had passed from the joys of carnage into cynical melancholy even while his hand grasped the cowering Lycaon, Priam's late-born. Why should he spare him?

"Nay, good friend; die thou too. Why thus bewail thyself? Patroklos died too, far better a man than thou. Seest thou not what a man am I, how fair and great? And of a good sire am I, and a goddess was the mother that bare me. Yet lo,

upon me too is Death and resistless destiny. There shall be either a dawn, or an evening, or a middle-day, when even from me shall one pluck out the soul in war".

And he, fasting, mad with sleeplessness, slew Lycaon, and many others, till by the beach of the sounding sea, he slept exhausted:—

"And there came upon him the soul of Patroklos most miserable, and stood over his head, and made speech to him: 'Thou sleepest, and of me art become forgetful, Achilles. Not while I lived didst thou neglect me, but now that I have died. . . . And give me thy hand; I would weep: for never a second time shall I return from Death, when once the pyre hath me. And never again in life shall we sit together, thou and I, apart from our dear comrades, and take our counsel together; but me hath loathely fate swallowed up, that had me for lot even from my birth. And even for thine own self, Achilles godlike, is there a fate, to perish below the walls of the noble Trojans. And one thing more will I tell thee, and lay on thee, if thou wilt obey. Suffer men not to set my bones apart from thine, Achilles, but together, even as we were nurtured in the castle of thy folk, when me that was but an infant Menoitios brought from

Opoëis unto thy folk, by reason of the sad slaying on the day when I slew the child of Athamas, I witless, nor willed I it, in a passion over the play of knuckle-bones. Me did knight Peleus there welcome in his castle, and nurtured me carefully, and named me thy squire. Even so our bones too let one coffin hold about.' And to him in answer spake Achilles fleet of foot. 'Ah, dearest face, why, tell me, art thou come hither, and layest on me all these behests? Nay, for thee each thing will I well fulfil, and obey even as thou commandest. But stand nearer me: though but for a moment let us cast our arms round one another and have our pleasure of deathly wailing.' Thus having spoken he reached out with his own hands, nor held he him. For the soul, like smoke, had gone beneath the earth, sighing faintly."

The sad story hung about Jack, like a dream, all the morning. Especially the hopelessness of it all, the despair following on the promises of childhood and the pride of youth. In that scheme of life what was there, save merriment, and glory, and success? And if these were denied or wrecked, as in the case of all these splendid heroes, what remained?

As he bicycled down the sordid Fulham Road

he was so occupied with the futility of Achilles' lusty babyhood, and sun-splendid manhood, that he never noticed the children, dirty, pasty-faced, and weak, who constantly appeared on the pavements, or at the windows of stuffy houses. The first time he observed the passers-by, was when he had crossed Putney Bridge, and was pedalling up the long hill to the Heath. The detestable neighbourhood, the cloying opulence of the tasteless villas displeased him: gates opened to emit suburban nurses with shiny perambulators, in which rode, and by which trotted, children whom he imagined to have all the luxuries of the prehistoric royalties of Homer, and more, with none of their virilizing, inspiriting conditions. He was rather inclined to be thanking God he had not been as these children are: at least he had traditions, ideals!

The day was hot, and he played badly. After lunch, he lay down on his back on the short turf, his head on his bag of clubs, and smoked a pipe. Then he dozed. A heat-mist veiled the immense scene, which he faced. Wimbledon's primness was behind him; the Windmill stood motionless to his right. Distance beyond distance retired to where all forms were tinted exquisite ultramarines

and indigo. Nearer, Roehampton spire showed pale above heavy trees, and through these, in an opening, the outline of Harrow Hill was just discernible.

But Jack dozed.

. . . . . .

Jack opened his eyes and sat up suddenly. Not any sound or shadow was it that had disturbed him, but only the consciousness of a personal influence. Three small children were, in fact, staring at him. The eldest was a small boy, the other two were girls, of whom the smaller, a mere mite, had her hands tightly grasped by her brother and sister. The boy was raggedly dressed in a shirt and trousers clearly not his own. A black and white scarf was knotted round his neck; he wore an old cap, deplorable boots, and no socks. The little girls wore nothing on their heads, and only broken shoes on their bare feet. Their dresses were obviously confectioned out of the same old blue skirt: the baby-girl's had no sleeves, but, to make up for this deficiency, she wore a plaid sash of cotton. They all stood staring at Jack.

"Hullo," he said, "what are you up to?"

They made no answer. The little boy's face, quite deeply lined already, had a normal expres-

sion of deprecation, but now he smiled for a moment. The baby never flinched from its stare. The elder girl pouted and looked suspicious.

"What's your name?" Jack asked the boy.

"Please sir, Harthur 'Utchinson," he answered quickly.

"Metathesis," murmured Jack to himself. "It's a great thing to have done Mods. And are these your sisters? What are they called?" he went on.

"Please sir, *she's* Jyne an' she's seven year old, and *she's* five an' her name's Halexandrarann," he averred.

"You don't say so," said Jack impressed.

"Please sir, it's the trewth," said the boy anxiously, too accustomed to the taunt of "liar". "An' I'm twelve," added this child, with the stature of six and the face of twenty years.

"Where do you come from?" went on Jack. He spoke to the boy as to an equal, and this effaced any magisterial note in his catechism.

"Walham Green, please sir; we lives in Eden Row."

"Great Heavens! what on earth have you come all this way for? And how did you do it?"

"There's a big house down there," answered he,

pointing, "where they gives yer bread. And please, sir, we walked and when Halexandrarann's tired I carries her."

"And what do you do when *you*'re tired?"

The boy smiled palely and said nothing.

"What did you have for breakfast?" went on Jack. "Bread and butter?"

"Bread," said the boy.

"And tea?"

"We don't drink nothing at breakfast. We 'as the fountains when we're thirsty."

"What does your father do?" said Jack, rash and inexperienced.

"Please 'e gone away," was the answer. The boy twisted his cap and stood on the defensive.

"Does your mother know you've come out here?"

"She told us to git aht. She's gone on the drunk. 'Times she locks us up all day," he added; "but she's lorst the key."

"And you don't work, I suppose?"

"Please I used to do a bit 'ere an' there, but me 'eart is bad," said the boy: the violet shadows round lips and on cheek-bones attested his words.

"Do you know anything about God?" said Jack suddenly.

"Oo!" said Arthur and Jyne together. And the girl, who had not spoken yet, added, "God's a wicked word: my farver used to say that, when he got mad: my farver *was* wicked," she concluded with a sort of vague pride.

"She don't know nuffin," said Arthur pityingly. But it was clear that he didn't know much more.

"Look here," said Jack, "stay where you are and I'll be back in a jiff."

He reappeared in a moment at the door of the Club and shouted to them. They approached, the boy still smiling diffidently, Jyne still defiant, the baby impassive.

Jack made them sit down on the step and administered hot coffee to the boy and milk to the two girls. Then he gave them some buns and chocolate.

The baby took the milk not over-readily.

"Drink it up, yer silly kid," said the boy, quite affectionately. "She don't often 'ave it," he explained. "But she do like 'er sup o' tea, when it's been standin' a bit."

Jack reflected with dismay upon the dyspeptic career thus indicated for Alexandrarann, but felt consoled that the bread-and-fountain *régime* was apparently sometimes supplemented.

Then he took the three children back on to the common, where he gave Arthur Hutchinson a shilling.

"Look here," he said. "Promise me faithfully, all of you, that you won't tell any one you've got that."

The dazed children promised.

Jack continued, feeling half-guilty, as who should be encouraging domestic secrets and disunion, and half-hopeless that the secret would ever be kept:—

"That'll last you for four days: you've got to go to the Lockhart's in Walham Green, Arthur, and get yourself a cup of cocoa, and a glass of milk each for Jane and Alexandra Ann. And by that time I or someone 'll have hunted you up, I hope. And now listen to me," said he, with a certain severity. The children must remember at all costs. "God isn't a bad word. Perhaps your father thought it was, but it isn't. God is someone who always sees you, even when you're locked up, though you can't see Him. And God loves you very much indeed." The eyes, watching his, which had already grown wide with wonder, now looked merely puzzled. "I mean, God wants to be ever so kind to you, far kinder than I've

been," he said, feeling an agonizingly grotesque impropriety in his words, but catching deliberately at the term of comparison best within their memory. "Very well; now every morning you've got to say—now, promise!—'Please, God, help me'. All three of you. Now, what have you got to say?"

"Please God 'elp me," said Arthur and Jyne. "For Chri' s'k' ahmen," added the boy, suddenly remembering a chaffing match in his slum, where blasphemous parodies supplied much of the humour. Then he looked terrified.

"Please I didn't mean to. Please I dunno what it means."

"Never mind that part," said Jack, rather hopelessly. "Now run along." He reflected that they would be taken on to no self-respecting 'bus, and sent them off without more conversation, or pennies to buy themselves a ride home.

He then lay down on his back in the sun and wondered at his own behaviour.

Jack was a very ordinary boy, after all. He had wholesome instincts; his home education had been refined and manly; he had never had temptation or occasion to flatter, nor yet to overwork, with consequent danger of reaction and slackness. In spite of his rather unusual artistic

sensibility, he was not abnormally introspective. In consequence his life had been simple, without moral shock or lapse of any startling kind, and his religion had followed the usual human course. It had, indeed, been from the beginning little more than a general code of morals, haloed by a mystic sanction the nature of which remained vague. It was connected in general with the ten Commandments, and with a series of examples, all of them Old Testament, except the supreme Example in the New, who spoke with compelling authority. In practice, emotion and circumstance gave content to both code and sanction. In his babyhood, accordingly, the sanction covered everything that he felt was "naughty"; he did not distinguish clearly, for instance, between the wronghood of dirtying his frock and that of dirtying it because he had been told not to. And the sanction was indefinitely strengthened by the fact that it was his mother who told him, in the divine half-hours on Sunday evenings passionately looked forward to, that Christ had said, for instance, that he was to love other little children. And he long continued to say his prayers, chiefly for the thought of the pain his mother would experience if she knew he had omitted them. At his public school

he found all that changed. The code had already dropped many of its features, and assumed much. Now, cribbing, playing billiards or cards, tobacco, entered puzzlingly beneath the sanction; the divine figure faded; never before or after did Public Opinion so nearly become his ultimate governing force. The Headmaster, as it was impossible to please the parents of all his scholars, should he preach too definite a dogma, wisely restrained his sermons to a moving exposition of morality in scriptural language: yet the boy liked the chapel services, especially on Sunday evenings, when the hymns struck his sentiment, and old resolutions revived. Only in the Confirmation-jaws did dogma lift its head; then the boys listened to it rather as the lore proper to one who, in addition to knowing Latin and Greek, was a clergyman. Jack, however, who never bullied, and instinctively put self-indulgence aside as silly rot, and always behaved in a gentlemanly way to his masters, resolved to go on keeping decent, to abandon the lies which Public Opinion fully approved of in the matter of cut work, and to give up saying damn. On reflection, he found that he had never had this last habit. His master had led him to suppose that everybody at Confirmation turned over a new leaf,

and he had believed, vaguely, that the unregenerate always swore. And as he did not cut the work less, but only excused himself less frequently, he developed a mild reputation for increasing laziness.

After a year at Oxford he found himself to have deserted the practice of explicit private prayer, though in chapel he repeated the set words without repugnance. He attended church with his people, but would certainly not have gone by himself. His few moral experiments had not pleased him, and he remained clean living. Had you asked him why, given his almost entire lack of logical moral sanctions, he repressed inclination and enacted against himself taboos, he would probably have told you that if you couldn't *see* that it was a rotten thing to be a bounder, he was sorry for you, and you'd better go and bound. He would profoundly have resented any such dragging up of the roots of his moral life to see how it was growing. Christ was coming back into his horizon, mainly as the scarcely seen founder of a splendid system. Still, the dogmatic outlook was not his: he would never have asked himself, now, the question if Christ was virgin-born; a year and a half later he would have answered it in the

negative. Yet he would roundly have called himself a Christian, and indeed he lived largely according to Christ; and all that was best in him he unconsciously inherited from a past of Christian tradition.

This, with the emotions set going by his reading, made it, perhaps, rather less astonishing that his dormant convictions awoke at the stimulus of those children's extreme need: without in the least having intended to speak of God, whose Name he habitually avoided out of a characteristic and half-savage "reverence," he had not only named Him, but had preached a whole theology of God's nature and man's duty to his docile hearers. He reflected on this almost irritably as he rode home, off his golf, he told himself, for that afternoon.

Tea went on in the small drawing-room above the Cardinalitial breakfast-room. It was a great contrast. The palest cream walls had on them but few pictures, dim pastels for the most part, or almost faded colour-prints. The electric candles glowed, and small mirrors winked, in fittings of tarnished silver. Silk curtains of the most elusive grey-green-blue produced an effect of mystical theology. The furniture was of the like phantasmal tints, embroidered with silver. Only, on

the floor, lay rugs of an Oriental scheme of crimsons, dimly gorgeous; and, on the tables, among tall vases of imperial carnations, silver frames full of early nineteenth century silhouettes strengthened, by their hard black surfaces, the colour-scheme else too vague. And just now the sunset threw great splashes of copper glory on the walls, and lingered in an indescribable harmony of contrasts in the curtains.

Jack lay back, gloriously contented, in a huge arm-chair. The beauty of this room to him was, just now, that you might smoke one cigarette in it after tea. Opposite him his brother Rupert and Cecilia sat by the tea-table admiring the son and heir, who was sprawling exultant over his Noah's Ark.

The son and heir, the first of whose many names was Dick, and who, for some obscure reason, was generally called Iddesleigh, which was about his third, was arranging the animals in pairs, and was at present wrestling with the elephant in person and in name.

"Et?" he queried, comprehensively, holding up the unfortunate animal to his mother.

"Yes, dear, Et," she answered. "Nice Et!"

"Et," said Iddesleigh, standing the animal up

beside the zebra. "Noah?" he went on, holding up that patriarch's wife (to judge of her identity by the rather scanty evidence supplied by the carver.)

"No, dear; Mrs. Noah," was the answer. "*Poor* Mrs. Noah."

Iddesleigh looked doubtful. And indeed no cause was assignable for the epithet.

The baby suddenly scrambled to his knees, then to his feet. Grasping Et firmly in one hand, he hurled himself across the room at the astonished Jack.

"Cousin," he announced, with conviction.

"Certainly not," said Jack. "I'm your uncle."

"Cousin!" repeated Iddesleigh, "Et!"

And he rather vigorously hit Jack's chin with the wooden beast.

"What am I supposed to do with it?" he asked.

"Uv," affirmed Iddesleigh.

"I'm to love it, am I?" for Jack was swift to interpret. "*Nice* Et," and he kissed the elephant with an admirable display of conviction. "And now what?"

"Cousin!" shouted Iddesleigh.

"My dear sir; owing to circumstances over

which—it's your *uncle* I am," Jack upbraided him, "and don't forget it."

Iddesleigh with the most startling suddenness detached himself from Jack, flung himself to the floor, and clasped the footman (who was carrying off the tea-tray) round the knees.

The silver and china rattled. Impassivity and despair struggled in the helpless man's countenance.

"Cousin," shrieked the son and heir, democrat before his time, and determined more than ever to teach Jack his place.

"Please, m'lady, Mr. Iddesleigh," murmured the man.

Iddesleigh's papa roused himself at last.

"Intolerable child," he said, unwinding the small arms from the lackey's knees. "Come along to bed at once, but say good-night first."

Jack promised to come up and see the delinquent in his bath, and after that function admired the minute creature in his ridiculous night-shirt being made to kneel down in his cot and say his prayers to his mother.

Iddesleigh knelt down in an angelic attitude, eyebrows arched, lashes just resting on his cheeks, hands together between his kneeling mother's.

"Please, God," she began.

"Please ——" began the infant. Then he opened his eyes, and saw Jack in the doorway. "Cousin!" he yelled. "Daddy!" with a leap from the insulting to the embarrassing.

"Not at all," said the scandalized youth. "Go on with your prayers, you unholy infant."

But Iddesleigh, now standing up in bed, jumped and screamed on Ets and Cousins and Noahs, interspersed with ejaculatory devotion, and reduced even his mamma to so pitiable a state of laughter that Jack retired precipitately.

He dressed for dinner with unusual deliberation. What a mixture! he meditated: what an extraordinary jumble. Children, and the thought of them, had filled that day: the children of thousands of years ago, happy, fighting and dead; miserable and dead; flashes of reality, and stories now for Oxford examinees: children of to-day; living with what future? For some, prospects, if any, of sordid inefficiency; then, if not extinction, what possible manner of ideal existence that would not be wholly out of relation to the pitiable past? For Iddesleigh, a future well-defined, not too smooth (public school, university and State-career would have their steeper places), yet

unanxious, and probably brilliant. Matter, perhaps, for a story for the children twenty hundred more years ahead. And himself? Childhood, at least, boyhood even, quite behind him. . . .

He tied his tie with a sense of finality, and chuckled at his catching himself thus platitudinous.

He tip-toed up the stairs, and found the door between day and night nursery open. Without entering, he could see Iddesleigh's cot, where the baby, who with that astonishing suddenness which characterized all he did had gone sound asleep, lay with closed eyes, hand grasping the patient Et.

By the cot Cecilia knelt, her face bowed over the baby's pillow. In her prayer, her soul reached far backwards into the past, and far into the future, and ranged this way and that over the broad earth. She collected into one love all the small children whose little hands had closed so tight about their mothers' hearts in all the universe; she saw, moreover, that to do so were impossible save for the more real and eternal existence of all these little souls in a Knowledge and Will, beyond all time and space. Jack was unconscious, at present, of the ultimate Fatherhood. Possibly, in a kindly future, he might wake fully to that awareness, for that his power to recognize

it was not atrophied, has been told. Indeed, in so sad a world, to watch the souls of little children (guiltless, at least, of offence against that Father) would seem to him, though only for a time, the best of consolations.

"It's a rum business," he concluded for the present, and a few minutes later took his sister-in-law down to the Cardinalitial dining-room, where her creamy draperies, and yellow flowers and sapphires looked delicious against the sumptuous background.

RED MAGIC.

"Δίψᾳ αὖος ἐγὼ καὶ ἀπόλλυμαι. Ἀλλὰ πίε μμου."
"I am parched with thirst and I perish. Nay, drink of Me."—*From a Cretan Orphic tablet.*

In the intense heat of the afternoon an absolute silence held the valley. Valerius had climbed the uplands which formed its northern wall, and which dipped abruptly, about a league to the west, near Aquae Sextiae.[1] The valley, broad here and cultivated, went narrowing eastwards, till it passed between the huge grey crag, towering a thousand feet sheer into air, which should be known, some day, as the Mont Sainte-Victoire, and the square bluff in which the low hills on the farther side of the valley terminated; the Mont du Cengle, with its curious band of pale rock between dark pine-woods above and below. All around lay the sun-bleached stretches of Provence, but here the fields were green enough, with the

[1] Aix-en-Provence.

glaring white road from Fréjus to Aix built masterfully across them, edged, for the most part, with planes and poplars. Up the lower slopes the little vines luxuriated; and olives, almonds, and fig-trees clothed the terraces of red earth with a hundred shades of green: still, even here, grey boulders protruded obstinately from the soil, and, as the hill-side steepened, only the pines and glossy holm-oak would grow among the rocks; here and there, a clump of olives floated like a grey-green mist against the dark. In the extraordinarily rapid Romanization of the province, villas and country-houses had sprung up on all sides, and their brilliant washes of colour and staring pigeon-cotes made bright patches under the sky of insolent blue, in which the sun blazed irresistibly. Where the hills parted you could catch a glimpse of the grey range of mountains reaching out westwards towards Marseilles, no more than a day's march distant, and fencing off Provence from a sea whose incredible azure made the sky itself seem colourless.

And this immense scene was absolutely still. Lower down, no doubt, the crickets were chirping noisily, and among the white stones of the torrent-bed you could catch glints of water; but there

was no sound and no motion. The keen, wholesome scent of broken rosemary, and thyme, and wild lavender rose all about the boy as he lay there under his rock; a curiously virile scent, in keeping with the dry little flowers, mauve, and yellow, and pink, that stood up sturdily among the scorched and brittle turf; in keeping, too, with the brown, vigorous youth of the lad, whose eyes were, for all that, full of dreams as he drank in the secrets of the afternoon, so silent, and yet so replete with hot life. With some disgust he compared this clean fragrance, which he loved, with the sickly-sweet perfume of the incense of which he must smell so much at the great religious ceremony to which his father meant to take him to-morrow at Aix. For a rich merchant of the neighbourhood was to offer a grand expiatory sacrifice for the purification of the town and for the health of the Emperor Antoninus Pius, and also (though he was not explicit here) for his own glorification in the eyes of the mob, to whom such a function furnished a holiday and an occasion for emotions varied and unusual. It was called the Taurobolium and Valerius' father was bound to attend it. He came of a Provençal family, distinguished even before it had received the Roman

franchise from the general Valerius, two centuries ago, and he was one of the decurions of the town, and his brother a duumvir. All the magistrates and religious colleges were to attend the sacrifice in state and Valerius was to go with his father.

Many a time had the boy felt, with a strong, dumb instinct, the universal sense of human faultiness, inadequacy, helplessness to right the wrong, which had prompted these appeals to a divine corrective. Not least did he feel it to-day, as he gazed with intense dissatisfaction at the wonderful view. After all, what was most *real* there, was the life of the men who tilled those terraced hill-sides, and built those pigeon-towers. And men's lives, he reflected, were not beautiful. That was a first and fundamental incongruity. But even the material aspect of things had its manifold flaws. Not a flower, not a leaf, that was quite perfect; the soil lay but thin above barren rocks; for the growth of crops other growths must be destroyed; the scene was full of things broken, or spoilt, or (and this struck him as infinitely dreadful) used, and then cast away as done with.

He rose, and went down through the wood to the

country house perched hard by on a platform of the hill. As he moved, his sandals snapped innumerable pine-needles, which sent up a hot and fragrant dust; between the dusky boles he could catch the brilliant gleam of white sand, strewn upon an alley leading towards a fountain which was shooting up its fine thread of water. On its farther side, with the valley grey between them, stood a fence of cypress-trees, black-green, in and out of which, he knew, huge brown butterflies were floating lazily. But dearly as he loved each least feature of this his country home, in his present mood it was a pain and a scandal to him that despite the fountain's silver thread, the country side was perishing for lack of water; that of the roses, a pink tangle between the cypresses, one half should already be overblown and falling; above all, that the men who lived in these bitter-sweet surroundings should be so wholly out of touch with them; so passioned after pleasures ludicrously inadequate as a substitute for happiness; so fretful over pains largely of their own making. Pain, surely, and pleasure lay ready enough to their hands. What was the flaw in men's soul, that they seemed helpless to knit together the bond that surely should link all visible

nature into harmony with itself, and themselves, and that great Power behind it called the gods, or God?

Naturally enough, Valerius had formulated in his thought an instinct which, in ages gone for ever, appears to have driven men to the rite of sacrifice; sacrifice, which, having so often begun in blood, was now, it would seem, all over the civilized world returning to bloody rites once more. For, after all, Valerius was feeling that the great current of joyful life, which should have flowed so strongly, yet so evenly throughout Nature here so beautiful, was in reality moving in an intermittent and difficult process: there was a weakness and sickness at the very heart of things. And his half-savage ancestors, when in some vague way the like feeling came upon them—and the sight of failing crops, or childless homes, or sickness in their tribe, would suffice to engender the sensation—had yearned like him for some rehabilitation of the old vitality, and (in uncouth and barbarous wise) would manifest their desire by slaying some living thing—perhaps held specially sacred in their clan, or even deemed one thing with themselves and with their god—and by devouring its flesh and blood before the "life" had left it.

By participation in this "living" blood the life of man himself was renewed.

So, for example, in the Orphic rite of the *Omophagia*, an integral part of initiation was the devouring of raw bull's flesh and the drinking of its blood. And this bull represented—nay, to the initiates actually *was*—Dionysus, with whom they became incorporate, and Christian Fathers, in passionate invective, rail at a ritual, which, to them, seemed a diabolical travesty of the Divine mysteries.[1]

To Valerius, it was this revival of a flagging life that seemed so all-important, and with the ideas of actual expiation of sin and of the necessity of the application of a cleansing blood he was far less in sympathy. Both these ideas were prominent in the ceremony he was to witness tomorrow, and he shrank from it not a little. For, indeed, as civilization advanced, the older religious attitude changed in an important point. Perhaps it was that men grew disgusted at the idea of a meal of raw flesh and blood; perhaps, as the idea of property developed, the victim came to be re-

[1] "With gory mouths ye rend asunder the flesh of goats that bleat for mercy, to show us that it is with God's majesty and divinity that ye are filled" (Arnobius, v. 19).

garded no longer as a means of attaining to a renewal of the divine life of the tribe, but as a substitute which might be slain in place of the guilty individual or community. Certainly the time came when the *shedding* of the blood, and not its *application*, became the important feature of the rite of purification. Valerius knew that at Marseilles, hard by, a human victim would be chosen if ever the city were visited by the plague, would be led round the city to gather into himself whatever evil might be lurking there, and would finally be driven outside the walls, and there executed, leaving the city purified from all taint. Almost every city of the ancient world celebrated this "expulsion" of evil in some form or other at stated intervals; so strong was the belief in the fact of evil, and in the possibility and obligation of its ejection.[1]

And for one people, this so prevalent custom, with many more of blood-shedding and sprinkling,

[1] At Athens and Rhodes condemned criminals, stupefied with drugs, were thus yearly slain: elsewhere, animals, or even puppets, would be the victims; or the particular form of evil to be expelled would be specified, Famine, or Old Age, or the Old Year, being represented by the expiatory victim.

was caught up into the sphere of Divine ordinance, and we have the sombre and pathetic figure of the Jewish scape-goat.

"And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins; and he shall put them on the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a man that is in readiness into the wilderness; and the goat shall bear on him all their iniquities into a solitary land."

With days of decadence, men became, not less superstitious, indeed, but less self-sacrificing; then arose an order of priests of whom Plato wrote:—

"And there are quacks and soothsayers who flock to the rich man's doors, and try to persuade him that they have a power at command, which they procure from heaven, and which enables them, by sacrifices and incantations performed amid feasting and indulgence, to make amends for any crime committed either by the individual himself or by his ancestors; and that should he desire to do a mischief to anyone, it may be done at a trifling expense . . . persuading not individuals merely, but whole cities also, that men may be absolved and purified from crimes, both while they are still

alive, and even after their decease, by means of certain sacrifices and pleasurable amusements which they call Mysteries; which deliver us from the torments of the other world, while the neglect of them is punished by an awful doom" ("Rep." 364).

Thus did Greek "priestcraft" keep its hold on a frightened yet restive people.

Still, following the law which forces the over-refined type to revert to the coarsest of its characteristics, first Greece, and then Rome, returned to the old passion for blood; Rome more than Greece, in proportion as the Greek worship of Beauty had not entered into the original Roman temperament. And it is heart-breaking to watch the splendid promise of the old Roman religion, sober, pious, almost timidly scrupulous, succumbing first to the more degraded features in the Greek beauty cult, and then to the bloody rituals of Asiatic worship. Abandoned were the old-fashioned rites of purification, descended from the wholesome religion of a pastoral and agricultural folk. February,[1] the

[1] Ovid, "Fasti," ii. 19, etc., tells us that in the old days, all things that served as vehicles for ceremonial purification were called *februa*—pine-twigs, wool, grain salted and roasted, for instance: though the bleeding head and tail

month of expiation, was soon but a name. People turned first to the vulgar superstitions of the Jews; later, as emotionalism triumphed, to the highly-coloured purifications of the East, with their wild alternations of penance and sensuality; to the dark-capped priests of Bellona, catching in shields the blood that spurted from their gashed arms, drinking it, and dashing it over their votaries; to the priests of Cybele, scourging their shoulders with lashes set with jagged bones; of this Apuleius gives us hideous pictures. Most popular of all, perhaps, from the second century onwards, was the Taurobolium.[1] The worshipper was drenched in bull's blood, and emerged from his dreadful bath, *renatus in aeternum*—"regenerate for eternity," as many inscriptions tell us—a phrase quite possibly adopted, defiantly, from the Christians, in whom the ceremonial, with its

of the "October Horse" is enough to show us that the old savagery was not absent, not to mention the priest of the Arician grove, who yearly "slew the slayer and shall himself be slain".

[1] *Tauropolium* it had originally been called, and was probably an immigrant from the Northern East, the home of the bloody rites of Artemis Tauropolus, with whom its original patron, Anaitis, had been identified.

many approximations to Christian phraseology and doctrines of baptism and remission of sins, excited an unusually lively abhorrence. Prudentius details its ritual. Firmicus Maternus cries out: "'Tis pollution, that blood, not redemption! And in manifold wise it drags men down to death"; and Tertullian can assert:—

"The very matter of the sacraments, too, the devil, in idols' mysteries, doth imitate. There are those whom he too dippeth, his own believers, assuredly, and his faithful; and from their bath he promises remission of their sins."

Certainly, in its journey from East to West, the ceremony had changed in tone. Originally the worshipper "offered" the blood: now, he "received" it; and, with it, purification for life, or for a period of twenty years. By way of South Italy, the worship reached France, and there most of all became official and famous. And to this it was that Valerius started on the hot morning of the following day.

The two sturdy Gallic cobs drew the cumbrous travelling-carriage rapidly towards Aix. The road, after a time, became enclosed between high garden-walls, over which hung foliage grey with dust. On the white plaster children had drawn

rude pictures, and religious or commercial guilds exhorted their members to vote for a particular candidate. And among lewd and scurrilous jests some Vergil-lover had scrawled up an exquisite line from his favourite poet. But as they approached the town, the gardens dwindled, and at a turn in the road the walls and roofs of Aix at last became visible—brick walls, tiled roofs, baked through and through by the relentless sun, and scorched to a uniform russet colour. The brilliantly-stuccoed villas of the country had ceded to gloomy town-houses, huddled closely together, with blank, almost windowless walls, and tinted, where a rare plaster sheathed the brick, with faded frescoes scaling off in the heat, which no one cared to re-touch.

They drove straight to the house of Valerius the duumvir, and after a delicately-prepared meal, which the boy, however, could scarcely touch on this sultry day, they went off again through the streets, past the medicinal baths which had given the town its name, and into the vast field where its fairs are still held. The crowd by this time was immense. Neighbouring villages had poured in to witness the pageant and to share in the expiation of its sacrifice. From his

high seat among the white-robed dignitaries, Valerius could watch the people at his ease. Ropes kept a path clear from the town temple of the Great Mother to a wide space in the midst of which rose a huge platform. Facing the path, an approach of sloping boards led to its summit; at one side was a little door. The whole was garlanded with roses, looped gracefully between the skulls of oxen fixed at intervals round the cornice. Lifted as he was in the decurions' stand, Valerius could see that the centre of the platform was pierced with holes, like a coarse-meshed sieve.

He looked round at the crowd with distaste, noting regretfully, and not for the first time, how these compatriots of his ran to extremes of bulk and leanness; mostly were the men lean, wiry of build, and with excited eyes: the women, perspiring profusely in the intense heat, with their bold colour, their high-piled black hair, were to him an unlovely spectacle. Also this sordid folk had brought its food with it, and innumerable braziers sent up a quivering, violet-coloured steam, from which the acrid reek of garlic and oily soups reached the boy. And round the tepid fat, where it had boiled over, clouds of insects buzzed.

Totally regardless of the whimpering of the children, whom they held gripped by the wrists, the women chattered incessantly, with a shrill, nasal mispronunciation of their Latin ; their metal ornaments rattled and flashed as with head and hand they pointed their discourse, and over it all rose the sharp cries of the little Provençal boys, darting like quicksilver in and out of the crowd, and the raucous notes of the vendors of cold water and the greasy pastry peculiar to that place. On the extreme fringe of the mob, Greek and Syrian fortune-tellers and conjurers kept up a bewildering hubbub of voice and motion.

Suddenly the heads all turned excitedly one way, towards the city ; and the rhythmic beating of drums and the clashing of cymbals was heard as the procession turned a corner. The musicians advanced first, leaping wildly, tossing hair that dripped with unguents. Their faces were daubed with white and red paint, through which the sweat furrowed its way. Then followed a band of priests, in white robes striped with lilac, saffron-shod, with brilliant pointed caps knotted under their chins. They led a richly-caparisoned mule, on which was a small shrine with crimson silk curtains. These, as they floated this way and that, disclosed an

image of gilded wood, seated on a throne borne up by lions, and crowned with a tower. To right and left, as they languidly advanced, the priests thrust out baskets, fixed to long poles; and money and provisions rained into them; they refrained, however, from the habitual scourging of their arms and shoulders, for the people were already in a frenzy of emotion, and the only blood to flow today was that of the four great bulls, almost hidden beneath their tinsel and roses, which followed the image. "O Great mother! O mighty mother!" moaned the crowd, as it passed them swaying on its unsteady supports. "O Cybele, hear us, be propitious to us, mighty mother." Each time the curtain swung back, and the image was seen, the great crowd heaved towards it, howling and praying. The Archi-Gallus, or high-priest of Cybele, whose "vaticination" had revealed the goddess' demand for this sacrifice, followed the bulls. He was crowned with laurel leaves, and was leading the great merchant prince, his wife, and his two sons, who were to "receive the taurobolium".

Arrived at the foot of the platform, the bulls were blindfolded, and led up to the sieve-like disc and placed upon it. Each new incident was greeted with a gasp of satisfied expectancy by the

crowd, now trembling with feverish devotion; and when the Archi-Gallus delivered an impassioned address, convicting the city of sin which blood alone could expiate, they were lashed to literal hysteria, and sobs and groans broke out on all sides. Valerius himself, in a sudden nervous access, yielded to the imperative emotion of the crowd and burst into tears. Painfully, as in a nightmare, he watched the destined four pass through the little door and stand beneath the perforated roof: watched the priests raise simultaneously their triangular knives, and slice them through the great veins in the bulls' throats. The blood spouted furiously out, drenching the floor, pouring violently through the holes on to the votaries beneath. Through apertures in the side of the platform the frantic crowd could see the three men and the woman soaking themselves in the crimson stream, flinging themselves on back and side and face, kneading the blood into ears and eyes, hair and beard, mouthing and swallowing it. At last, when the carcases lay bloodless and still, the four came out, "regenerate for eternity," "hideous to behold". Howling like wolves, the mob flung themselves upon them, kissing their feet, sucking at their garments, grovelling in the

red tracks which they had left behind them, that they might themselves obtain were it only a smudge of the purifying blood. *Polluit sanguis iste, non redimit!*—"Pollution, not redemption!" cried the Christian Father. But for these people it was an eternal regeneration.

Beneath the sun, veiled now in sultry mist, the procession formed again; taking its way this time to a stone altar newly erected in honour of the feast, and decorated with skulls and roses. Some of the bulls' flesh had been set aside, and was now carried on a large golden dish, sweltering in blood that clotted quickly in the heat, cracked, and flew away in brown flakes. Then the procession returned, the consecrated four still in it, caked and crusted with gore which matted their hair and distended their eyelids. And the crowd, jubilant in its new-found purity, drunk long ago with heat and wine and blood, streamed towards the stalls and stages of the fair: and everywhere the courtesans, in their huge flaxen wigs, moved towards their line of booths, and stood there waiting, each beside her flapping curtain.

A wave of almost physical revolt swept over Valerius. Coupled to the ever-increasing oppressiveness of the weather, now definitely thunderous,

the scene, which stirred in his father only the vague dislike felt by a well-bred man for the crowd, made him sick and faint. Weak already from lack of food, he rejected the supper which his uncle offered him, and was glad that an early return to the country was decided on in view of the gathering storm. Still, evening was drawing in as they trotted off into the gloomy East.

At first the country was astonishingly still. Of its greys and greens and reds, only the greys remained: yet for all that, the crimson colouring of the day danced fitfully before the boy's eyes, and in his ears still rang the shrieks to the Great Mother. He longed for the thunder, if only as a passionate protest against the exhibition of savage perversity which he had witnessed, the great purification which had culminated in a debauch. And indeed the wind soon rose and blew violently, without, for all that, appearing to cool the air. It shrieked among the tops of the poplars, which still caught the sallow lights of the West, and made a ragged, flapping line of pallor against the slate-coloured clouds and mountains which closed in the valley. The slender trees dipped, and then righted themselves, creaking uneasily: on either side quivering olives made patches of ghost-grey

upon the dark: little eddies of dust formed and careered along the road.

At last huge drops began to fall: slowly, at first; but just as the carriage rolled beneath the stuccoed gateway at the bottom of the estate, with its meretricious statues in exaggerated attitudes and draperies, the storm burst with a crash. Torrential rain blotted out the landscape. The horses tore up the steep path, and swinging round once more, drew up on the platform where the house stood. Valerius sprang out, and, pleading fatigue, went straight to his room. Exhausted by the varied emotions of the day, he flung himself on his bed and sank into a heavy sleep.

About three hours later he awoke. The storm had crashed itself out, and the rain was over. A marvellous freshness found its way into the little whitewashed, red-tiled room. He rose and opened the shutter. The ground fell sharply away on that side of the house, and he could see far down the valley to right and left. Over yonder lay Aix, asleep now. On the other side the huge grey crag of the Mont Sainte-Victoire floated phantom-like and unsubstantial in the moonlight. Below him, where the road gleamed, the poplars were standing perfectly still, and the scent of their

leaves mingled with that of the drenched mould and fields, and filled the night with sweetness. Earth's great purification was accomplished.

Valerius drew deep breaths of this cleansed air, and realized that all physical as was the change in nature and himself, there was somewhat in it for his soul, too. And first, as he looked out into the limpid blues and greys of the night, he felt that behind it all was a Purity which had not been refused to inanimate nature, and must surely come some day, to himself. And possibly, as the austerity of the silent scene made itself felt across its beauty, he guessed that it might only be through storm and blood that the great expiation should be effected. Certainly there were living near him those for whom that hope was now numbered among things of faith, and who looked back through not quite two centuries to a scene dreadful and dark, which yet held the secret of their present joyous purity. Valerius knew nothing of these men "regenerate for eternity," but their influences were all about him, and towards them he and his world were infallibly moving.

He sighed contentedly, and went back to his bed.

MORS IMMORTALIS.

"The Souls of Infants on that Threshold wailed."
—VERGIL, "Æn." vi. 427.

I.

"'ITTLE dog," said the pre-Achaean baby, in pre-Achaean. That the clay quadruped was painted mustard yellow and scarlet, had a head like a horse, and a tail like a turkey, and wore the characteristic pre-Achaean grin, mattered nothing at all to the baby.

"'Ittle dog," he repeated, and threw it vigorously upon the pavement, where it broke.

The baby screamed with joy.

"*Naughty* boy," said its pre-Achaean mamma; and, being a person of elemental passions, although she was a Queen, she smartly smacked the mutinous little hands between her own.

"'Ittle *dog*," repeated the baby through his howls, and flung out fat arms and legs in protest against punishment.

But his small waving fist encountered, alas! the precious ornament of iron which dangled from his mother's headgear, and of which she was quite inordinately vain, and the twisted wire tore the brown flesh.

The wound healed all too quickly, hiding the evil. Poor Queen; she could not guess, as she scolded her fretful little son, that the fatal rust had spoilt the blood that flushed so in his cheeks: at first she rejoiced as she saw how quickly the new skin came, and even danced the quaint iron ring before his eyes. But the baby seemed to recognize it for his murderer; and afterwards, when the arm grew swollen, and the wound broke out anew, she recognized it too, and flung the loathsome precious thing over the ramparts.

Mostly she shunned the great hall where her lord sat among his men, and nursed the baby in her own buildings. Her lord was angry with her, and she owned her piteous failure. Wooed by him with such costly gifts of gold and amber and metal inlay work, she had given him no children for long years, till at last this little heir was born to confirm the dynasty and to save her from those other sons and those alien women. . . . And now it was spoilt, irretrievably, and through

her fault. Never from the beginning had she really hoped; nor, in her heart, had she blamed any but herself, for all her scolding of the fretful baby.

No, she would have to die, too; that was best; and even so, the under lords were restive, and had no love for the new dynasty, insecurely established with its new customs and usages, over their heads. And even should they support it against the Northerner, of whose turbulence up behind the black mountains and probable excursions south they had heard from frightened fugitives, the sceptre would depart from the royal house were the heir not at hand to take it over from a wounded father.

Very slowly the pictures of the future filed before her, as she sat, however, by the hall-fire one night when the men had all betaken themselves to bed. For the baby loved the hall, with its pictured lion-hunt, and was crying for it. The hearth was built in the centre, and by it, crouching against one of the four great central columns which upheld the roof, the royal mother held the baby and trembled. For in the voluminous shadows of that vast place the bronze and gold and crushed glass with which the walls were so lavishly decorated sent out a million brilliant points where the

fire was reflected. The shadows of the tall columns, tapering strangely towards the base, reeled and waved about her as the flames leapt and fell. The naked limbs of the huntsmen writhed ruddily, and the angry lions' teeth seemed to gnash in the unequal light. But she bore it for the baby's sake, who had cried for the lions; or even forgot, at times, the terrible shadowy hall, as the pale visions of the future trooped, from darkness into darkness, to look into her wide eyes.

The baby had ceased moaning for some time. Then he opened his eyes.

"'Ittle dog," he asked anxiously. She put into his hands the clay toy, which, since he had so continually begged for it during his delirium, she had found and mended.

"'Ittle dog," he repeated, and dropped it for the last time on to the floor, where it broke. Then, with a little movement of all his body, he shut his fingers up and so died.

And we, who like to believe that the little feet of children find an easy path into their new country, have a right to hope that through no grey wilderness did this little ghost flit forth five and thirty hundred years ago.

When she saw what had happened, the Queen

strode out into the court. A gale was blowing, and the rain whistled in the wind. She passed under the echoing colonnades, and, in the cold dawn, the little bundle grew stiff in her arms. There she was found, her hair matted and her heavy clothing soaked, when the women went out, in the morning, to grind corn. They brought her back, and she gave over the little bundle to her lord. Returning, she saw the broken toy still lying by the fire. Picking it up, she was for flinging it savagely away, as reminding her too dreadfully of the past—of how the baby had laughed over it, and of how his breaking it had angered her. Suddenly she remembered his burial. It was the custom of that early folk, as of so many others, to believe that, in some dim way, the dead still lived beneath the earth, if they were put beneath it, or at least in the great dead houses which were built for them. And in those vast buried buildings, all things that the dead had loved and used were placed beside the corpses. The baby should have his toy.

And so, when the funeral took place, she braved her frowning lord (furious with this woman who slew the son she had been so slow to give him), and entered the royal tomb.

To reach the tomb-chamber itself you passed through a long passage, driven horizontally into the slope of a hill, faced with gigantic masonry, and ending in a tall doorway. Through folding-doors and a porch (roofed here by two colossal blocks of hewn stone only) you passed into the burial-dome. Immediately from the circular floor the sides swept superbly upwards in an inward curve, bowing themselves round and about until a single block closed them in. Bronze stars and rivets, and, at a certain height, a band of bronze-work flashed in the torchlight, and insisted on the curving lines of masonry, circling ever narrower up the dome until they vanished in the gloom.

In this awful audience chamber sat the dead. For, on pebble mats, which showed white upon the red clay floor, the dead Royalties reclined, head sunk on chest, hands on the earth, knees drawn up, and back propped with their clay cushions. Sometimes they sat as skeletons; sometimes the skin was still there, black round the bones, since embalming was by now abandoned. In no case were they recognizable, for no gold mask, as in the earlier days, remained with features stamped out into it, smiling and twitching as the light flickered over it. But the dead kings and princes

sat there safe enough, foreheads and arms and knees clasped with gold; and all around them sceptres and knives and necklaces and gay weapons and tools flashed bright.

On the little mat near the middle sat the baby, clay pillows propping him. A little necklace and some tiny gold dishes with real bread upon them rested near him, and close to his hand stood the little dog.

The Queen looked back for a last time, in the flaring, smoking torch-light, to where the little brown baby remained, hands quiet now, but face alive beneath the alternate gloom and glare.

Then, dumb with pain, she went out into the world and the future.

. . . . . .

I was suddenly recalled to consciousness of the museum case (from which the little yellow dog, dug up when the tomb was excavated, grinned at me) by a small, moist hand which clasped my thumb.

Looking down, I saw a small child beaming with good-will and in her free hand holding up for my admiration her penny toy. It was a little dog, worked in red and yellow wool, and it wore the most fatuous of grins.

"'Ittle dog," said the small child with conviction.

For a moment I felt a trifle dazed. Three and a half millenniums, one might have thought, would have stood for something; leagues upon leagues of land and water have made something of a division: and yet I must fain act and speak exactly as I would have to the pre-Achaean baby all that world away.

"'Ittle dog," reiterated the child severely.

I stroked the absurd creature's neck with one finger.

"He's very pretty," I said. "What's his name?"

But a thin voice prevented her answer.

"Come away, dear," said her governess, advancing with several older children, "or you'll annoy the kind gentleman."

Almost immediately afterwards I heard her say:—

"How often have I *told* you, Muriel, not to talk to strangers?"

And yet I had known her all those centuries.

II.

Theon was astonished at receiving, on the very eve of his return, a letter from his small son. He

was in Alexandria on business for a week at most, and the little Theon had no call to be sending letters in that short space of time. "We can't afford the expense," he told himself irritably, turning the papyrus-slip over and over in his hand before he opened it. But no doubt his mother had indulged the boy. That was always happening. And he looked with annoyance at the sprawling address: "Tubi 17th. Give this letter to Theon from his son Theonas." That was characteristic! The boy could not even spell his own name right. He broke the thread and began to decipher the ill-written, ill-spelt, ungrammatical epistle.

"Theon to his father Theon, greeting."

He had got the name right, there; merely, no doubt, because it was in the nominative! so the man grumbled: but the correctness was not for long.

"That was a pretty thing you done, not taking me to town with you. If you won't take me with you to Alexandria I won't write you a letter, and I won't talk to you and I won't never say I'm glad to see you, never again; and after that if you go to Alexandria I shan't take your hand and I shan't kiss you back never any more. If

you won't take me with you that's what I'll do. And Mother said to Archelaus that it quite upsets me, not being taken. And that was a pretty thing you did, sending me a present of a lot of rags [here there were letters scratched out: small Theon's sarcasm had outrun his penmanship, and his father could make nothing of the next words] . . . on the 12th when you sailed. Send me a lyre. You *must*. If you don't send it I won't eat, I won't drink. So there. I hope you are quite well."

The man folded the papyrus with a sigh, stuck it among his other papers, and went out to his business. But all the morning his mind kept reverting to the letter. The splendid blue sea, dancing beneath the high wind along the marble quays, seemed to him an insult, so obvious was its air of freedom and strength. And he recognized, bitterly, that himself he bore the mark of pettiness, of insignificance. Had strength been his, his wife would never have become the shrew she was to him, nor have spoilt, by her exuberant petting, the small boy whom after all he loved. He had flushed foolishly several times as he read the impertinent letter. The boy deserved a flogging, but he would certainly never get his deserts. The

prospect of the mother's tears, and, above all, her exasperating account of the incident sure to be delivered to the knavish Archelaus, abashed the man. Archelaus was the assistant who took care of the village shop when the master was away at Alexandria on business. Archelaus would sympathize with the woman, would insinuate himself even more intimately into the family concerns. And Archelaus, thought Theon, was too often at the master's house, and here was the boy's letter showing that he was there again in his absence, and his wife was taking the young fellow into her confidence. "It quite upsets me," forsooth, "not being taken!" It would be some time before he took his naughty little son to Alexandria with him. And the boy's cool description of the new suit he had sent to him, just before leaving, as a bundle of rags! From whom had he heard that, if not from his mother? And to whom should she have said it, if not to Archelaus? No doubt the suit was second-hand; the woman would have seen that at once, and pointed it out to the sneering assistant: still, it had been good enough: rags, indeed! And, in face of that, the lad's demand that his father should send him a lyre, without so much as a "please" to soften the im-

pudence! He might sing to the moon for his lyre.

Almost at once reaction overtook the weak man. It would only mean more nagging, more carping at his stinginess towards his son, in the hearing of Archelaus, no doubt, who would probably return next day with a gaudy harp which he had paid for nobody knew how. He would prevent that, anyhow. Nobody should say that he was outdone by a mere assistant in generosity towards small Theon.

He turned into the enormous thoroughfare which, by its two hundred yards of paved breadth, divided Alexandria from end to end. The bazaars stood there flamboyant beneath the gay Egyptian sunlight, and into one of them he entered. The shop-girls, half Greek, half Egyptian, clothed in spotted muslins and with hair fantastically crimped and scaffolded, saw at once that here was no remunerative customer, and it was long before he could get served.

"A little lyre, please," he murmured diffidently.

"This," said a girl in orange and violet, holding up a large harp of *papier-maché*, with the head and breast of a sphinx, "is generally considered

to be a very handsome lyre," and she twanged the strings without enthusiasm.

Theon asked for something far less expensive.

After he had induced the girl to give him what he wanted, he passed out, turning at the shop front and noticing the girl laughing across her table with a young Alexandrian. Buying and selling, Theon reflected sourly, were easy enough there; toys and lives and hell. Never had he felt so futile and so cheap.

He reached home the next evening; the sun had already dipped, and he was cold. But there was no light in the house, though the door swung loose. He entered, but there was only silence and the dark. Suddenly nervous, he fumbled passionately for tinder to strike a light. When the lamp shone out, he saw on his table a letter. He snatched it quickly and read.

"I am tired of being deserted while you go off to amuse yourself at Alexandria. I am going to live with some one who will love me, and who will care for me and the boy. My little darling will not be despised now and put off with dirty rags while you are parading with your friends in town.

"LYSISTRATA."

And a postscript, in the assistant's hand :—

"I always knew you were a fool, but now even *you* can't have any mistake on the subject. Theon salutes his father. Your faithful servant,

"ARCHELAUS."

Theon the elder sat quite still in the little living-room till it was deep night. Not a sound reached him, and no clear thought stirred in his numbed brain till the lamp's sudden flicker and extinction roused him. He was icy cold, and fetching another lamp he looked round for firing. The hearth was empty save for ashes, though a lump or two of wood lay near it. Crumpling the letter together, he threw it down. Then, without any emotion, he slowly broke to pieces the little lyre; and its papyrus wrapping and wooden framework made a blaze, and over this he sat warming his hands.

Since there was no future, he clung to the only detail of the past which was not intolerable. The memory of his little son, at least, time could transfigure, and the growing flame of reminiscent affection could save his story from being too wholly grey and sordid. And, as a fixed point round which that memory might flit, he kept the

insolent little letter he had received at Alexandria, taking a certain pleasure (foolish enough, perhaps) in the conventional good wishes of its close.

He kept the letter, and they tossed it with his other papers, when he died, on to the garden dust-heap, and not long afterwards, the street was demolished, and falling matter covered it.

And thus in that dry sand the papyrus slip survived, and was dug up, and has been ticketed and numbered and criticised by learned persons,[1] who assure us that for perhaps a century or more, when it was written, the world had had within it Christians; and our own age is beginning, at last, to wonder whether it is wise in trying to do without the healing hope which they alone, had he met them, could have offered to Theon.

III.

It was this hope which shone in the prison of St. Perpetua, and gladdened her martyrdom at the very time when Theon passed, in the same

[1] "Oxyrhynchus Papyri." Ed. Grenfell and Hunt. Vol. I. no. 119. The letter is badly written in a childish hand, and needs some conjectural emendation. To this we have very sparingly resorted.

country, from his sad life into the untravelled dark.

Perpetua, only twenty-two, but married already, and with one dear baby-boy still asking for her breast, brought to the hideous prison all the power of girlhood and of motherhood to suffer. In the story of her passion a few of her own words are inserted. "That day," she wrote, "we were taken into the dungeon, and I was terrified; for never before had I been put into such utter darkness." And she speaks naïvely of the close air of the packed cell, and of the hustling by the jailers. "But most of all," she adds, "anxiety for my baby made me suffer."

But Tertius and Pompeius, "the blessed deacons," bought for the prisoners permission to use a larger prison, and there the child was brought to her and she gave the suffering baby her breast, and obtained that it might be left to her in the prison. "And straightway he revived, and I was released from my anxiety and distress for my little one, and I felt as though my prison had become a palace, so that it grew dearer to me than any place beside."

And when the time came for her final sacrifice, this was rather that she had to deliver back her

baby to her pagan father's keeping than that she had to die; but by a gentle miracle, as they relate, from that day he ceased to ask for her breast.

And bravely she passed, gored by angered beasts and struck by sword, to the great Shepherd, who, in her vision, had given to her a mysterious Viaticum.

THE NET.

"*Ita te, amata, capio*"—"'Tis thus, beloved, that I take thee."

(*From the formula of the admission of a Novice among the Vestal Virgins.*)

APRIL had already come; but the tiny bedroom, with its concrete floor and plastered walls, was so cold that a small wood fire had been lit before Manlius was sent to bed.

But when you are just six years old, it needs no firelight dancing redly on your walls, to keep you awake; not even after the most ordinary of birthdays! And this had been no ordinary day.

As Manlius lay there, wide awake, with his eyes still sore from the tears in which his festival had ended, the events of the past hours were racing through his head. The presents had come first; and there, gleaming suddenly as each ember crumbled and fell in a shower of brilliant sparks, hung the toy sword which his mother had given him, with a timid little kiss and a prayer for the

new year. Beside it lay the fragments of a painted bow, the gift of his Aunt Atacina. She was a large and voluble lady, the greatest possible contrast to her quiet little sister, who, near a husband in whom Roman pride of race ran so exceptionally strong, could never quite forget her own slightly inferior rank. The boy loved Aunt Atacina in his fashion, and was grateful to her, albeit the bow had broken at the first trial. It was just like aunts, after all, he reflected, to give you pretty things that broke.

Sempronia had given him a saddle and some superb reins for the pony, which was his father's present. Sempronia was his elder sister and very religious. These two facts made her distinctly trying at times: but in the matter of the reins she had shown herself pure gold; and so at the moment he only thought of that, and not at all of Petronilla, his younger sister, the Vestal, who had been the unconscious cause of that evening's tragedy. When he was quite a small boy he had had to call her Nilla, because that was so short and easy; and later Nilla-Nilla, because that was so much more expressive. It was true that Sempronia thought the name undignified, and refused to use it before the slaves, because, she said, it would

be demoralizing. But when, one day, she had heard, to her amazement, her stern and solemn father with the pet-name on his lips, she showed herself inclined to hint that it was really she who had invented it, and would call her sister by it (when visitors were present) with an engaging smile which somewhat disconcerted the little girl. But of all this Manlius was not thinking. Imagination had taken him back into the dark stable, wedged into the angle between two of the crooked Roman streets, whither the whole family had adjourned to watch the investiture of the new pony in its handsome trappings. It was all quite clear to him; the irregular stalls; the high slits of windows; the stables smell; the little statue of Epona, the stables-goddess, on her bracket, and hung with garlands of cheap spring flowers. Then, by association of the ideas of dark and firelight, his fancy wandered to the cavernous kitchen, where he had received the congratulations of the cooks. He was already growing dreamy as he recollected its huge fire-place, its quaint frescoes of kitchen-life, with their explanatory legends. *Assum Venit*—"It is coming to boil". *Belle Bullit*—"It is bubbling beautifully!" And above a picture of a scullion detected in some larceny, *Clepis*

Nec Me Celas—"You thief, *I* see you!" And through it all he heard the voices of the slaves, who, like all the household, adored the merry little lad, invoking in his favour the innumerable gods and goddesses connected with the kitchen.

And there arose around him a vision of the divinities which Roman pontifical lore had marshalled in their lists of *Indigitamenta*, quaint adjective names, arrayed in a semi-legal classification of the spheres in which the divine power would energize. Mere names, indeed, they remained to most; but, as Manlius had listened to his old nurse crooning the long litanies, his imagination had invested each with its special form, grotesque and bizarre as were the names themselves. There were those who were invoked but once, perhaps, in a lifetime: Vaticanus, who prompted a child's first cry: Fabulinus, who presided over its first word. Behind the faded yellow curtains of his cot, heavy with the fantastic dreams of childhood, there bent, as he always imagined, the goddess Cuba, whimsically severe, whose sole task was to make him lie straight in bed. Before his birth his parents' married life had been replete with these divine influences; in his babyhood, Ossipaga had been invoked to set his bones firmly; Statanus,

when he was learning to stand; Levana, to lift him when he tumbled; Iterduca presided over your faring forth from home; Domiduca over your return; or should you wish to remain within doors, it was advisable to have the favour of Manterna.

It throws a flood of light on the old Roman character when we realize the life which this intricate network of religion held together. A life which represented itself as to be lived wholly within the family circle, and in labour on the farm; a life, in short, which focussed entirely round the fields and the nursery. And every least factor of it was knit into one by the myriad duty-meshes of worship. What is so noticeable throughout it is the conviction that a divine power exists, and can and must without cease be reckoned with: a power not malignant nor revengeful, in the main; still, ubiquitous in its manifestation, and very jealous for recognition. And by his response, full of a grave dignity for all it argued a certain fear of these divine lords, and of a simple beauty and poetry for all it descended to details so amazingly homely and practical, the old Roman proved that he at least was ready to do his part, to be fair in the divine transaction, to submit himself to the power which rightly claimed submission, and which,

though he could never have conquered it, he might at least resist. Fear there undoubtedly was; the current etymology derived the very name of God from the Greek word for fear.[1] And, from ancestral tradition, even the modern Roman prayed *uelato capite*—with hooded face, lest he should see his god and perish. But the fear was essentially *religious*. *Veteres Romani in dis animaduertendis castissimi et cautissimi*—"The old Roman, in his worship of the gods, was most scrupulous and exact". The fear could rise in the spiritual scale, and pass into that religious awe of which we are so conscious as we read Vergil. *Adparent dirae facies*—the "awful faces" of the gods look out upon us from the veil of his verses, even as they looked out upon the men of that old time from the dark, moving mystery of woods that seemed to them half alive, with their tossing hair, and waving hands and arms, and ceaseless voices. *Numen inest*, they whispered as they passed them and even in the later days, when faith had petrified and was now fast crumbling away, the woodsman was wont to pray first for pardon to the god who

[1] Servius, on "Æn." xii. 139, derives *deus* from δέος. And *ibid.* ii. 715, he says, *Conexa sunt relligio et timor*—"Religion and fear are closely connected".

might inhabit the tree he was to cut down, and thus only to apply the axe. For it was in the "divine country" even then, that the earlier devotion most of all survived;[1] the country, whose mysterious sighs and voices had long ago given birth to the whole company of fauns,[2] just as the Karmentes gathered up into themselves the strange words, and inspirations, and admonitions, of which women were aware as they nursed little children while the divine Thought mused on their future, and "sang their fates" to those who had ears to hear.

[1] As an instance of the lengths to which the subdivision of the spheres of divine energy would go, we may mention that with the history of every ear of corn three deities at least were concerned: Nodotus, with the swelling of the grain; Volutina, with the enfolding sheath; Patulena, with its gradual opening. The husbandman, again, would sacrifice to four earth-deities—Tellus, Tellumo, masculine and feminine forms of the same word; since (as was the case with many of those vague earth-powers to whom the Romans prayed with the saving formula—*siue deus siue dea es*—"whether thou be god or goddess"), earth's sex was doubtful—Altor, for that all things drew from earth their sustenance—and, strangest of all, *Rusor*, "for that all things return to earth again—quod *rursus* cuncta eodem reuoluuntur."

[2] *Faunus* is probably to be derived from the same root as *fari*, to speak.

Brusquely, the dreamy pageant of divine names and faces vanished from the boy's fancy, as a bubble bursts, with all its tinted, twisted pictures, and vanishes away. For a sudden question had presented itself to him, reviving the memories of the tragedy of a few days since, which had occasioned the tragedy of this evening. Had dolls, too, their god? their peculiar patron and protector? Manlius sat straight up in his bed, wide awake. After all, the thing was probable enough—since the very drains were in the charge of the goddess Cloacina; his very digestion in that of Carna, to whom a yearly dish of bean-gruel and lard was offered in its favour. Ah, if there were indeed a divine Pupa, he knew from whence his misfortunes were coming! For, only two days before Petronilla had been translated to the Vestals' house, he had deliberately and wickedly broken off the head of her favourite doll. The doll was called Ulpia Urgulanilla, and was quite peculiarly ugly and beloved. As he thought of it, however, fear of the divine vengeance yielded quickly to a very human sorrow. How cruel he felt now, as he pictured to himself the little girl, helplessly holding the broken toy, her lips quivering, her eyes full of tears which she would never, never

shed as long as he was there! And, indeed, in his Roman obstinacy, he had at once left the nursery, lest he should be sorry and seek forgiveness. But he sobbed now, as he remembered the evening of that day, when he hid behind the cypress-trees in the old Roman town-garden, and had watched, himself unseen, the doll's funeral. The lamp in the tiny chapel of Silvanus, the garden-god, had supplied the flame for the pyre of cypress-twigs. On this was laid the doll in her papyrus coffin, which had been a sweet-box. In fact, the last sweet was offered by Petronilla by way of funeral offerings on the tomb. After the child had gone away, Manlius crept out of his hiding-place, and on the doll's grave had sprinkled a handful of the pink spring roses that clambered over the grim garden walls. But the roses showered down their beauty all in vain; and in vain had come the peace of a glorious evening, when the sun set in splendour, making the fountain look like molten gold, and the cypress-spires like bronze. For, two days afterwards, the Ædes Vestae had swallowed up Petronilla, and no word of reconciliation had been spoken.

The institute of the Vestal Virgins went back, in all its details, and with a peculiarly straight

pedigree, to the earliest days of Rome. In those dim times, when the first little village-groups began to form upon the hills near the Tiber, life was still very difficult. And in the lack of the most ordinary necessaries of life, it had been of prime importance that one fire, at least, should be kept alight in each community, and this duty had been entrusted to the daughters of the chief or king, who was also the tribal priest. Centuries afterwards, the very name of king had been abolished at Rome, save in its conservative connexion with religion: the chief priest alone was still called *Rex Sacrorum;* he alone had a house still named the *Regia,* or regal palace. Yet through all those ages there had subsisted the College of Maidens, whose chief duty was to keep alive the sacred fire, and, as if to mark their origin quite decisively, no sooner did a girl enter this vestal office than she passed wholly out of the legal dominion of her own parent into that of this chief priest who once had been Rome's King, and who now stood to her, legally and socially, as her father.

Nothing reveals better the Roman attitude towards religion than the ritual and rules of these Vestals. Every least detail of that early

home life had been invaded by the religious idea, stereotyped by it, and had passed into a ritual action. As they had had charge of the common store-house, so now the Vestals played the chief part in all the festivals—and these were numerous—which were connected with the harvest, or seed-time, or agricultural prosperity generally of Rome. It was they, again, who prepared the *mola salsa*, the sacrificial cakes; but just as their house was devoid of all "modern" conveniences—it was long before pipes were tolerated as a means of bringing water to their dwelling—so too this food itself might be prepared in no "modern" way; and all mill-stones were forbidden for the grinding of the grain. For all that, at the great June festival of the Vestalia, the merry-making was generously extended to the bakers and millers, whose donkeys paraded the town, dressed like the mills they ground, with strings of cakes and flowers. Nothing, perhaps, can give a better idea of the relentless sanctification of the most sordid details than the mode in which the termination of the festival was announced. Q. St. D. F., the notice stood. *Quando Stercus Delatum Fas*—"When the refuse has been carried down (i.e., to the Tiber), the holiday is over". That is,

the great concourse of devotees was so sure to sully the immaculate cleanliness of the maidenly habitation, that a concluding sweeping out became imperative, and was itself elevated into the final ritual action of the long ceremonies.

It was among these women that Petronilla was to spend at least thirty years of her life—since for that period alone the vows were taken. Few, however, were known to leave for the world again. Her father had been divided between indignation and satisfaction when, among the twenty names selected by Augustus, the lot had fixed on his daughter to fill a vacant place among the Vestals: indignant because she would pass so completely out of his power into that of her new "father"; pleased, because she was entering on so eminently Roman a life as that of the Vestal Virgins, and one surrounded by such high public honours. Alone among women, they might ride in wheeled carriages within Rome, escorted by their lictors and taking precedence of the highest magistrates. Wills were deposited in their custody; their witness in court was received without oath; if, by some chance, they met a condemned criminal, they could demand his absolution. Their duties were light, and mainly ceremonial. For ten

years they studied, for ten years practised, and for ten years taught them to the novices. But the penalties for neglect were terrific: if the fire went out, they were scourged: if the vow of chastity were violated, there awaited them the tomb in the Campus Sceleratus, the Roman Field of Blood, with its couch and lamp and tiny supply of food; and into it the Vestal, living yet, but dressed in her shroud, was walled.

On that very afternoon, the boy's mother, his aunt, and Sempronia had returned from their visit to the little sister with whom he was to live no more at all. He entered the room almost at once with their return. His aunt was loudly lamenting the year's first heats; was fanning herself vigorously, and largely helping herself with her free hand to cakes and wine. "That dear child!" she exclaimed. "*Most* sad. Who can possibly tell what will become of her? Thanks. Just a drop more. No! I couldn't eat a crumb. Well —thanks. And the Pontifex! my blood freezes when I think of him." And she really shuddered, as she recollected the Emperor-priest, whom they had seen for a moment, with his face so sad, so tired, for all its courteous smile; and expressive, at times, of a cold audacity for all its polished calm.

"How you could let her go, my dear," she went on to her sister, "I really can't imagine. How brave you are! But then the Virgo Maxima is such a charming woman. *Most* fortunate." Her sister sighed, and looked at her stern husband. But he, content with his absolute authority over his wife, made no effort to check his sister-in-law's effusion.

"And the dear dove looked so sweet," she proceeded: "Sempronia, my love, wasn't I always convinced that the short hair and white veil would suit her admirably?" Sempronia had bright yellow hair, which she now wore frizzed, being in this before the fashion by six weeks. She did it from a sense of duty, because it was only right to prove that religious persons were not necessarily old frumps. Her honesty, however, compelled her to condemn severely such persons as used Batavian pomade to obtain the coveted blonde tint; nor would she ever flatter people's looks behind their backs. So she observed with acerbity that the twisted woollen fillets which the Vestals wore over their foreheads were perfectly hideous; and that the purple rim to the veil didn't at all suit Petronilla. "My dear," said her old aunt, rather pained, "one would think you didn't *like* Petro-

nilla to be pretty. Sometimes you talk as if you weren't one of the family at all."

Now Sempronia was very much her father's daughter, and was not at all sure that she appreciated this identification of herself with her mother's people. She drew herself up, therefore, a little stiffly, and her silence gave Manlius his chance.

"Aunt," he said suddenly. "Has Petronilla got a doll?" At least, he thought, she would have a doll, for even if she didn't miss him—his lip quivered at the thought—life would be all too sad were Ulpia Urgulanilla not replaced. But Sempronia forestalled the older lady.

"I'm astonished that you like to think about that doll, dear," she observed melodiously; "besides, Petronilla didn't love it nearly as much as you pretend; besides, she's got other things to think of instead of dolls *now*."

The boy's warm heart contracted.

"She *did* love her," he insisted; "and she *does* miss her. And you know you aren't telling the truth."

Repentance had broken the barriers indeed!

"Of course," said Sempronia, complacently addressing the world at large, "I may be completely wrong and no doubt am. Still ——."

This was a favourite phrase of Sempronia's, and quite peculiarly irritating.

Manlius stamped his foot.

"I don't *love* you," he said. "And I love Petronilla more than you do. And I don't *want* your harness or anything."

Sempronia was seriously hurt, and went away. And the elder Manlius, half sympathizing with his son, yet for discipline's sake punished him severely and sent him off to bed.

Coupled with the lack of sleep, so many conflicting emotions, so many vivid memories threw him into a passion of excitement. Fear: resentment: remorse: above all, a wild craving for Petronilla's pardon, a frenzy to see her. Where was she? Was she asleep? Impossible that he should now be feeling thus, and she all unaware! Then she must be thinking of him—grieving for him. He sprang out of bed; by instinct, and with no conscious effort of will, he had flung on his tunic, had gently opened his door. He was on his way to Petronilla. The stairs fell away, like a black well, before him. At their foot, the corridor stretched silent, save for a sound of dripping water, which seemed to come from every part of the house at once. He kept deliberately away

from the barred and guarded house door, for his brain had suddenly grown clear—too clear, in the abnormal consciousness induced by want of sleep. He felt as though he were walking on air, with a strange lightness in the top of his head, and the sensation of hot grit behind his eyes. His plan was perfectly straightforward. He was to drop into the garden by an easily-unbolted basement window. There, the water from the fountain flowed out beneath the wall into a tank in the road outside. It ran beneath an arch generally barred by a wooden grille, which had lately been broken and had not been replaced. Almost without knowing how he reached it, he found himself standing in the narrow channel—crawling beneath the archway—standing in the street outside. He raced down the slope of the Caelian, and then paused as the narrow street approached the level.

Then it was that the scene first became to him unreal and fantastic. Where the houses stood high and black on either side they seemed to be rearing themselves aloft only to leap down on him, and crush him. Where the moonlight trembled in wide patches, the buildings flickered and wavered in his eyes as though they had been only the evocation of an elfish magic, airily fencing him

round about to delude his goings. The yellow flame of the lamp in one of those little chapels with which the diplomatic piety of Augustus had dotted the town, and had dedicated to the Lares and his own genius, seemed to him unnatural and disconcerting simply because it brought back, for a moment, a look of solidity to the wall which it illuminated. But he went on steadily, through this phantom town, moving up the Via Nova, with the Palatine on his left, and the twin crests of the shadowy Capitoline before him. Surely, when he reached them, the walls of Vesta's sanctuary would part, and, by a ladder of moonlight, Petronilla would float down to him, or himself pass lightly up to meet her?

Suddenly, at the bottom of the forum, he found himself, in very fact, face to face with the precinct of Vesta. The high, blank wall stretched relentlessly around it. Above the wall peered the square block of buildings where the Vestals lived, and kept the old image of the Palladium, and the *Fatalia Sacra*—the secret and sacred things on which the salvation of Rome depended. Just beyond, he could see the domed roof of the little circular building, pillared and approached by steps, where the sacred fire burnt. So old, that no

image was admitted into its austere ceremonial; so holy, that it was above all consecration of human priesthood, this tiny edifice was the heart of the older religious life. Just beyond, again, was the official residence of the Pontifex Maximus, the dreadful Emperor Augustus.

Arrived near his goal, Manlius for the first time perceived that he could never really reach it. His nervous activity, born of sleeplessness, collapsed abruptly, and he found himself, quite helpless, in front of the walls within which Petronilla lay asleep, wholly unaware of his proximity. He fell abruptly from the heaven of dreams on to the bed-rock of reality and despair.

Then, as suddenly, there came a moment of illumination. The religion that had run through his whole life in so intricate a network of duties claimed and rendered, presented itself to him as a vivid whole, in which the gods and their world stood out as clear as did his own. The measure of their exactions was that too of their worth, and that, no less, of their fidelity in the future. The divine bargain struck between man and God would be rigorously observed, by the divine master as by the servant. Even as a man was "impious" if he gave God too little, or *superstitious* if he over-

stepped the line by an excess of devotion, so too on the part of the gods, *pietas*—affectionate observance of a duty—was assured. And for a moment he saw himself and Petronilla, saw his father, and his family, saw all Rome, caught up into a system of action and reaction, wherein every one of the innumerable occasions on which God was recognized in the course of daily life should be balanced by an increase of the all-pervading divine protection. Needless to say, he formulated nothing of this even in his thought, much less in words. Only there was a flash of intelligence, from which he emerged wholly content, on a sudden, with Petronilla's lot, keenly recognizant of the divine presence, and fully convinced that he must make the best of his way home.

At the time, the midnight escapade seemed to have no further results than a severe punishment (for what was surely the most unconscionable act of deliberate naughtiness!) and a heavy cold. But the cold left Manlius always weak, and after a youth spent in wrestling for life, he retired altogether from Rome and occupied himself with antiquarian research into the history of the city, and especially of her religion. As he pursued it back and compared it with the similar tangle of

observances prevalent in Greece, in Egypt, in the East, it was inevitable but that he should pass through a phase of tedium and disgust. It showed itself to him as a network indeed, but tyrannous, coercive, intruding its meshes into the most intimate recesses of human life; knotting men's limbs down into grotesque attitudes, tying their tongues into formulas of which the words had long ago become meaningless, fastening their very thoughts into an artificial pattern from which there should be no escape. Or he thought of his father, to whom it had become a mere part of that rigid Roman system from which he was too good a conservative ever to break away. Or of Sempronia —and then he smiled. For she, strictly orthodox at first, even after her rather late marriage, had startled Rome by suddenly adopting the black and white costume of the fashionable cult of Isis. It is true that Pomponia Calvina, her greatest friend, said that she had heard it said that Sempronia's reason for this was the novel contrast which the Isiac colouring made with her yellow hair; she herself, however, did not believe this, and no doubt Sempronia had excellent reasons for what she did . . . and certainly Manlius could not deny that she brought up her children admirably.

Those were indeed days of doubt and sorrow, when he seemed to see religion crumbling all about him, and only its perversions flourishing in a wanton growth. But that early vision, as we may call it, near the Vestals' house, never wholly faded from his mind; and though he shuddered often at the thought that the divine life might never reach him through the old channels, or even that these themselves had been erected on a false presumption, and were meant to bring him what was really non-existent, for the most part he lived in the careful practice of the old rites, and the habit brought to him a certain peace. He could not guess that the son who was now so great a disappointment to him —who in some small official position was wasting his youth in the splendours and languors of the East, should be caught some day in the net which was even then being cast from the very heart of Rome. That new net was a system as personal, as intricate, as exacting, as ever the old had been, a force strong enough to brace the youth into a heroism which should not shrink in the end from the pitch and flames of Nero's martyr-lighted gardens. That was a net destined at last to take and hold the souls of men who so long had been knitting supports for their own weakness, a weak-

ness which could however make nothing less frail than was itself; a net which should fall upon the Vestal Virgins themselves and catch from them their eldest, whose name as an apostate her sisters would raze from her statue.

And to-day when the fire in the ruined round-house is for ever extinguished, and we can pick the little roses by the cloister ponds, and smile at the naïve imitations of archaic pottery in the cupboards, and handle, even, the solitary sacred cake which the rifled ovens still preserved—over us too has the net fallen: are we struggling to break its meshes, only to set our peoples free to take the road down which have hurried Egypt, and Babylon, and old, forgotten Rome?

ROMA FELIX.

"Attulit et nobis aliquando optantibus aetas
Aduentum auxiliumque Dei."[1]

—"Æn." Vergil.

THE Italian garden faced due south, and, over its long balustrade, you had an unbroken view of the Sussex Downs. At the northern end, curving flights of steps rose to a higher terrace, balustraded too; and from the unseen garden, above, the laughing voices of two children could be heard. Into the supporting wall an alcove was built, which enshrined a Crucifix. Poppies filled all that part, a smouldering splendour of dim purple petals with patches of satiny black and powdery black centres; or white as ashes, with sudden flares of scarlet, lemon, and crimsons of every shade. Geometrical flower-beds, framed in tiny box hedges, lay round the central fountain. Its heavy basin

[1] To us too and our prayer at length the years have brought God's advent and His aid.

hung low above a pool where gold-fish moved like bright shadows: the little jet leapt and throbbed its few inches, and then slid whispering over the mossy stone. Yews and cypresses closed in the two sides of the garden, and on one of the stone benches beneath them a man was seated, having the view to his right.

His grey beard was trimmed to a point; his eyes, vague, just now (for his thought was inward), were yet so kind that you felt the laughing children, whose uncle and guardian he was, would soon have loved and never have distrusted him. He held an Aldine Vergil in his hand; but the book was shut, now; for, as I said, he meditated.

It had needed but little imagination to dream himself away to Rome, or rather, to a garden just outside it, on the Janiculum. The actual city, the Tiber running down towards the fora and the docks—for it was the ancient Rome his fancy visited—would surely be seen did he but rise, peer over the balustrade, and round the wall of cypresses. . . . The Sussex Downs, with their undistinguished outline, were not so unlike the mounded Sabine Hills, though the downs were merely modest, while the others, conscious of an aristocracy of splendid centuries, seemed content

with their high title-deeds of history, and careless accordingly of dramatic form or colouring.

> Hinc septem dominos uidere colles
> Et totam licet aestimare Romam.

He had often murmured Martial's lines, watching, as through the poet's eyes, the "seven lordly hills," and, with him, as from the Janiculum, "reckoning up all Rome". But he was out of mood, to-day, for the dainty realism of the silver poet. Martial's little bit of description was, no doubt, a cameo for refinement; still, in it he gave no more than an exquisite presentment of the obvious; while the student would have suffered, to-day, to "reckon up" what he saw; the measurable, the readily appraised, was precisely what he shrank from, and his eyes sought the secrets of a more elusive vision.

Soon he caught himself with a far different rhythm on his lips.

Dic, quibus in terris, et eris mihi magnus Apollo. . . . Still light, still graceful, was the movement of the line, but it held echoes of an immemorial music; and its tiny ripple seemed, like ether waves, to reach the very stars.

He repeated Vergil's line over and over again. Even at school it had caught his fancy, less for the

rather pointless riddle it introduced, than just for its melody, perfect apart from any meaning of the words. It grew with strength, like an undulation sent forward from the open sea. Out of the first long syllable it rose vigorously, spreading itself forth into the long-drawn sounds of *terris*, pouring its light and music into the dimmed echoes of *et eris*, and tumbling with quick repetitions of the tiny vowel into the sonorous name in which it found its limit. What an artist! he meditated What a musician must Vergil not have been, to have devised, even in his youth, such harmonies. . . .

Soon the air became full of the Vergilian rhythm; hexameter curved upwards from hexameter, waving with carefully limited variations, gentle in their dignity, like these Sussex Downs, which became definitely, now, the homeland hills whose muffled outline shows itself in Vergil's "Eclogues".

So it was scarcely with astonishment that the student saw, advancing through the tunnelled yew hedge opposite, a man clothed in old Roman dress of straight white tunic and woollen cloak with its simple transverse folds. He moved hesitatingly, as though short-sighted, and paused by the foun-

tain to watch the rose-leaves rocking in the dark water. Now it could be seen that he was tall; his hair was dark and straight, his cheeks sallow and indrawn. Looking up, he observed that he was not alone, and came awkwardly along the little gravelled paths towards the near side of the garden.

"Vergil!" whispered the Englishman, standing up. He went forward, took the visitor's hand and kissed it reverently. He then led him in silence to the stone bench, spread the rug wider, and motioned to him to sit.

The other smiled, his dark face perceptibly flushing. With a shy, almost deprecating gesture, he sat down.

"I cannot express to you," said the host, "the joy I have in welcoming you here. Do you know, I have constantly felt that you would some day come, and were, in fact, quite close to us."

"I have often been here," was the answer, "and have as constantly wondered whether I should meet the master of the garden. Now that I have done so," he added with great simplicity, "I feel that I know him as the half of my soul."

"Full forty years, for my part," rejoined the other, to whom time was still important as an element in, or a test of, friendship, "I have believed

myself of your acquaintance. And at the very moment of your coming, the music of your 'Eclogues' was ringing in my thoughts—as it might be the tiny bells of those lilies of the valley. Indeed," he continued, picking his words with a fastidiousness partly natural, partly a scholar's trick, and chiefly because he wished, in this colloquy he felt would be so brief, to open his whole heart to his visitor—"Indeed, I can assure you that there is scarcely a corner of this garden to which certain of your magical words have not attached themselves, so that it is consecrated, emancipated (as it were) from the present, and the meeting-place of centuries."

He paused, and looked to where the poppies flamed and smouldered. "*Lethaeo perfusa papauera somno*," he resumed. "'Poppies steeped in slumber and forgetfulness.' The most golden of our own poets wrote of your verses that in them was 'all the charm of all the Muses often flowering in a lonely word'. How true, of that phrase of gorgeous and solemn sadness. It thrilled me even as a child. It made that poppy-path for me a place of haunting fancies, where already I saw things enchanted and remote, as if through a veil of sleep."

"Even as a child?"

"Assuredly! For from your verses I first learnt Latin: it was you who transfigured my world and let me out of prison."

"Alas! many another than myself could have taught you Latin. The courtly Cicero ——"

"Ah, never Cicero! to write your tongue, perhaps; but not to love it, nor his world, nor himself as I love you, dear friend, for so I dare to name you."

"But Lucretius? and my dear Horace?"

"Yes, yes. To-day I love them: they too fling open to me their life. The 'shudder of holy awe' thrills me when I listen to the austere chanting of that Atheist who prayed. And I am ready to laugh, and weep no less, with your little comrade. For there is wistfulness in his merriment, and courage in his gloom, and sincerity beneath his affectations. Still, they could never have been the *first* to open that world to me. Too arid was the desert through which Lucretius travelled before he could sing paeans over death, and Hell, and God. And Horace, well, his Satires and Epistles were withheld from me, and his lyrics alone (illogical liberality!) permitted; but only when those have been studied, can the living man be found beneath the artificiality of these.

"But you, whitest of souls, as he called you, you led me swiftly and gently into your golden atmosphere of a mysterious Italy, haunted by august and tender memories, instinct with divine influences, and brooded over by the destiny of eternal Rome."

"*Quid non mea carmina possunt?*" Smiled the poet. "To think my verses could achieve so much!"

"Much? far more than that. Your music, I have told you, rocked me: your phrases touched life with mystery. But your pictures could give to my boyhood which clambered for releases, the divinest holidays.

> Contemplator item cum nux se plurima siluis
> Induet in florem et ramos curuabit olentes.[1]

"What loveliness! and what *movement*. Intricate black twigs, one moment; then, one single mass of bloom. *In florem:* the secret is surely *there*. Oh, you are responsible," he said, smiling, "for my cult of '*in* with the accusative'! Not *flore*, 'with bloom'—stationary, instrumental:

[1] "O watch, once more, when the almonds, dense in the woods, robe themselves into bloom and droop boughs of fragrance" (Verg. "Georgics," i. 187).

not *in flores*, flowers as numberless as the twigs; but *in florem;* a *transit* into *one* new glory. There were two lines from a holy poem which had the self-same quality—'Breathe Thou the silent chords along, Until they tremble *into song*'. They too created the impression of great world-forces latent, gathering in volume, confluent beneath the surface, till they should stream outward into one splendour of colour or fragrance or harmony, and reach the world of our slow consciousness. *In florem!* I would refresh myself with that passage on stifling afternoons in the schoolroom: I could travel out of its cramped benches and yellowing ceiling and panelled walls; I could go beyond the sleepy sunlight, even, of the quad, just visible through the cobwebbed lattices, and escape into an air lit with rays filtered through an exquisite roof of almond-blossom. . . ."

After a pause, he turned again to the meditative figure at his side.

"Yes, those were sunlit lines," he resumed. "But I had always loved the night best. It was a breathing-space. There were in it moments when life genuinely paused—well after midnight, when the machinery had finished its creaking, its uneasy settling into stillness; yet not too near

dawn, when Nature turns in her sleep, somehow aware that only an hour or two separates her from the need for the new effort. . . ."

"*Dum intempesta silet nox*," murmured the poet.

"The very words! 'When timeless night is silent.' A real interval: positive cessation. Poor little fellow! how often I'd get out of bed and peer into that emptiness. I had always to turn from one point, where distant lights shone with dreadful persistence from the railway. The chiming of the school clock terrified me: it was a lie, I felt: 'time *isn't* passing: I've not got to begin again just yet! There'll be no to-morrow: there never was a yesterday. There's nothing, nothing, nothing!' And *intempesta* could always make a loneliness, so to speak, in the heart of the noisiest meals, or games, or when I was bullied—a thing which still happened often enough in the schools of forty years ago."

"*Mors immortalis*," quoted the other from his sombre master. "You were in love with the time 'when shall be swallowed up This dying life by Death that cannot die'."[1]

[1] "Vitam mortalem Mors immortalis ademit,"—*Lucretius.*

"No!" said the other, quickly. "Death would not help. I had been brought up, you see, to look for another life directly after death, and just then that idea was intolerable. You will not say, dear poet," he cried abruptly, "that boys cannot have sense of these things."

"Far from it," said the sympathetic listener, "though my childhood must have been more sheltered there beside the brimming Mincio, and sleep-soft meadows, and farms whose gables smoked at sunset when the long shadows came down from the mountains. You remember that? And yet —you remember too—something there was . . . *ut uidi, ut perii!*" He looked, smiling half whimsically, at his neighbour.

"Then that idyll was true?" cried he, delighted. "It all happened just like that? I hardly dared believe it."

"*Saepibus in nostris,*" began the other, quoting his own most sensitive love-verses. "'Thee in our orchards, little maiden—for was I not thy guide?—thee with my mother saw I, plucking the dewy apples: 'twas the second year of my teens had already welcomed me—already from the ground could I reach to the brittle boughs. . . . Ah! how I saw! how was I lost! how the cursed

madness reft me!' Certainly it was real. Theocritus was my model for the mere verses; true memories were their soul. And, though I never saw her again, I was faithful to that love of my boyhood!"

In the silence that followed, the student remembered the nickname "Maiden," *Parthenias*, which wanton Naples had fixed upon her poet; and he recognized, in those years of renunciation, the source of that *spirituality* which burned, white-hot, in the pagan poems.

"I did not know this," he said. "And yet there was something in your poems which set me too on a path of deliberate loneliness. It came in your 'Georgics'; in that tale which the Emperor bade you substitute for the panegyric of your friend on whom he had forced suicide. Eurydicé had died: her lover Orpheus sang his way down to Hades, his magic voice quelling its uproar, or sweet amid its silences, winning him back his betrothed. And it was ruled that she should be restored if, as he brought her back, he should keep from looking in her face till actually they had reached the upper air. And when he had come with her to the very edge of the light, after all the efforts and the courageous sacrifices,

his passion mastered him; his will crumbled; he turned and looked at her. And she went backwards into the mists—her hands white and suppliant, one moment, across the dark, and her voice wailing in the winds. . . ."

"Well?" wondered the poet.

"Well," returned the other, smiling a rather crooked smile, "I was a boy of imaginations, quests, ideals. I fell in love with fancies, and trembled with excitement if realization seemed imminent. But your story first revealed for me the meaning of experience, and occasioned a resolve which braced, I think, into manliness the sentimentalities of which I have been telling you. For it made me realize that I never got what I wanted when I grasped at it. Nothing was what I dreamed it would be. Nature was never so tremendous in her water-falls or precipices as I had conceived; nor the sea really blue, nor golden hair more than yellow. Above all, human sympathy was never the passionate, exclusive interpenetration of two souls which instinct said was possible, and therefore to be craved.

"So rather than be forced to give up belief in my ideal, I resolved, as Orpheus was bidden to resolve, never to look upon what might perhaps

embody it. For fear of having to confess the universe did not contain what I wanted, I refused to test its contents. So, after working really hard for something, or walking far to see a view, or waiting long to meet a friend or a hero, I would often renounce, at the last moment, to profit by my opportunity when it came, or at least would curb my emotion when the end was achieved, nor own that 'this' was really what I'd wanted."

"Alas," cried Vergil, "but you were a philosopher when I was still at my grammar! And to think that when I really had the end in sight, and could promise myself years of philosophizing once the 'Æneid' should be finished, Death took me."

"My dear friend: do not think that Philosophy was your destiny! At least, not the academic thing for which you hungered. You were a Theologian—but again," he added, noticing the poet's start, "not primarily in the academic sense, one who collects tales about the gods, or rationalizes on their nature; but you could see the Universe, and love it passionately in whole and in detail, and yet never lose sight of that mysterious Force which began it, sustains it, and directs it and you to a predestined end. *Mens agitat molem;*

'Thought thrills its mass': *Adparent dirae facies* . . . awful eyes looked out on you across its lattices, and your whole soul was one that worshipped."

"It is curious," said Vergil, "to hear you tell me all these things about myself. I see that they are true, yet, while I lived, I was not conscious of them. Indeed it might have been thought that I who wrote on a topic not of my choice, in a metre and style, and with episodes, traditional and not of my invention, would have remained disguised, elusive, even for my contemporaries."

"You have dominated," retorted the other, "the literature and imagination of centuries. You have entered as magician into the folk-lore, and as prophet into the religious dramas, of generations remote from yourself, and close to us. That proves your personality! You took Homer, Hesiod, Theocritus; you plundered the Alexandrians; but you gave us back pure 'Vergil'; art need not be artificiality; and, where you completed your work it always 'lived'. I own this is not why our forefathers worshipped you: their own art was mostly dead, and they could not recognize what really 'lived' in yours. There has been a reaction against their ill-judged applause and theatrical

mimicry: but men of to-day are, thank God, reacting against the reaction, and detect in you that soul which is as real and precious as the earlier soul we so admire in Homer."

"You mystify me," answered Vergil. "And yet if I could indeed be aware of the divine spirit governing human history, that may have saved me from the bitter sadness which surely must be his, who, rather than risk disillusionment in what he loves, ever denies himself approach to the beloved. And that, if I understood you, was your habit."

"But your own poems are sad!" cried the student; "Love in your 'Eclogues,' is a sick, pathetic thing, with morbid tints that you grew out of. Yet even in the 'Georgics,' the fields themselves are sad, often enough: 'Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour till the evening,' and passes to his long home. Throughout your noble 'Æneid,' mortal men are 'sick': *mentem mortalia tangunt;* the human story went to your heart, and you had tears for life. Oh, how that melancholy has oppressed me. So much futile death; so many young hopes spoilt, and long efforts cheated. Æneas himself only gained his high end, the foundation of Rome, after seeing first his loved

Troy burned, his father die in exile, and his adored wife perish just as he believed her saved from the ruin of his past. The mad moments of his passion for Dido never drugged that earlier grief: the 'flower-haired' maid, Lavinia, was but the means of linking close his fortunes with those of the old Latin race. Not to that disillusioned exile, weary of roads and seas, should she have been given, but to her loyal lover Turnus, a finer figure, for all his faults. Violent essentially, and you meant us to see him so; still, never a coward nor small. '*Sancta ad uos anima,*' he cried to the ghosts, when the gods deserted him, '*atque istius inscia culpae Descendam, magnorum haud unquam indignus auorum,*'[1]— noble lines, too noble for grammarians to torture! Well, he too had to renounce: nothing came to him for those merits and for that history of his: your poem closes as his soul seeks darkness, indignant, and with a groan."

Vergil was about to answer, when the voices of the two children, who had finished their game upon the terrace, interrupted him. They ran down the steps, tossing a ball which, thrown too far, fell into

[1] A stainless soul, and ignorant of that offence, shall I come down to you, not once unworthy of my high ancestry.

the poppy bed. One, a boy, ran to look for it; the other, a little girl, smaller than her brother, went almost straight to the crucifix and knelt before it. The boy found his toy, noticed his sister praying, looked round, saw his uncle apparently alone and deep in thought, and went to kneel too before the crucifix. There the two children remained, praying aloud with extraordinary simplicity.

"Ah!" exclaimed the poet, for once almost roughly. "That *makes* me speak! I had striven not to mention the incredible thing which you permit to make hideous the whole beauty of this garden. What possible perverted motive can you have in permitting death and torture, and the fate of a slave or a felon, to enter this exquisite place? And in forcing—for so it must be—little children, even, to face it? Did I not say your philosophy had blasted the colour from your own life? And here you infuse poison into the very veins of Happiness."

"I do not wonder at your words," said his hearer, gravely. "But there is no forcing, *Expertus potest credere quid sit Iesum diligere.* Those are my little nephew and niece whom their parents, dying, confided to me. I have told you of my

boyhood : long reflection on it, and on its sequel, has made me understand that even a child can start upon a career in which the very joys, the very virtues, are the legitimate offspring of profoundest pessimism and disbelief. Such would have been my career, or at least my fate, had not one new element entered my life, to which also it was your poems directed me. From the outset then, I have cared to have that element in these children's world. They are praying now before that Anguish which alone makes laughter tolerable and the truest joys possible. For that Renunciation saves us, when we renounce what life offers, from the guilt of suicide, and, when we accept it, from idolatry. That Sufferer proclaims that the world is not only inadequate (as I had guessed) but sinful : it has done its best to murder God ; hence we do well to renounce it, and look elsewhere for consummation : still, He proclaims no less, that permission for that Death was only given, because God loved the world, and hence we too must wish it well, and look for its renewal. Here, I say, is that concrete, positive future which saves renunciation from nihilism, and makes the ascetic to be no suicide. Christ 'emptied Himself,' and was obedient to the Death of the Cross—*Hei mihi*," he murmured,

with completest reverence, "*Hei mihi, qualis erat!* And hence He bids us give up everything. But it is precisely in *Him*, because into Him so surpassing a Restoration shall be made, that forthwith He gives us back the All. Only after I have, from the very bottom of my heart, given up—let us say, this lovely garden and those hills, can I take them back as part of a world that has become sacramental, and where God and man are, some day, to be perfectly united. Even you, dear poet, sang in words which have mystified the learned and the holy of many an age, of the new and stainless History, the return of the Virgin, and the birth of the Saviour-Child. But 'unto us a Child *is* born,'" he quoted; "'unto us a Son is given, and His Name shall be called Wonderful; the Prince of Peace'."

"Whose," said the visitor, "is that sublime and stately music?"

"It was sung by a Hebrew seer," replied the other. "*Attulit et nobis aliquando optantibus aetas Aduentum auxiliumque Dei.*"

Just then the children, who had finished their prayer, came towards their uncle, to ask for their evening story, still quite unaware, it was evident, that he was not alone.

"Trojan War night, Uncle!" cried the boy, clambering on to his knee. "Tell us some more about the Wooden Horse."

But their guardian, sitting there beside his unseen companion, resolved to speak out to him, in the tale he should tell the children, all that remained of his own great debt. He had confessed how, in the Vergilian poems, he had found the joys of music, and phrases which transfigured this lower world, and pictures which were visions into a fairer; a philosophy, too, which had recast his life. It remained to relate what, in those poems, had revealed to him an ideal to the pursuit of which it had also stimulated him; an ideal realizable to satisfaction, yet never to be exhausted.

So he told the children of the sequel to the ruin of the old world, symbolized by Troy, and of the striving of divine and human forces in the "giant's task" of founding the majesty of Rome. It was the Vergilian spirit which animated the story: "*tendimus in Latium*"—"For thee, O dear, dear Country, mine eyes their vigils keep ——": the straining eyes of Æneas, fixed on the "ever receding shores of Italy," seemed lit with the radiance of a distant City such as should illumine the faces of St. John, of Augustine, and of Bernard. Each

pain and separation of the journey would be forgotten, hour by hour, as the goal was neared; yet one day it should be a joy to remember even these. Yes, though the heart, sick with deferred hope, needed to be strengthened by the thought that the worst was over, that "even to this" God would give an end, yet "even this," *forsan et haec*, all this long weariness would be a joy, looked back upon in the light of the vision of peace, *rerum pulcherrima, Roma*, the supreme loveliness, Rome.

"Uncle! was 'Neas a Cafflic?" was the unexpected interruption from the small Mary Monica, unembarrassed as yet by relative chronology.

"Of course he wasn't," the boy (more learned but—who knows?—less wise) retorted. "He was years and years before there *were* any Catholics."

"But, uncle," she urged, disregarding him. "If he wasn't a Cafflic, why did he want to go to Rome so much? And why was he *so* good and gave up everthing?"

"Oh, you *are* a silly!" her unchivalrous brother upbraided her. "He was going to *build* Rome, and he was going to be a king; so it didn't matter his having to give up lots and lots of things."

"Well, Baby," said her uncle, kissing her,

"you're right and Dicky's right; and how that can be I'm sure I don't know. Now sing me 'The sun is sinking fast' and run along."

Hand in hand, facing the grey student, the small children sang that exquisite evening hymn. . . .

As Christ upon the Cross [went on the verses] His head inclined
And to His Father's hands His parting soul resigned,
So now herself my soul would wholly give
Into her Father's arms in Whom all spirits live. . . .

The wide levels of sunlight passed over the evening fields; half the garden, where the men were sitting, was in the shadow of the cypresses; but the rest, with the fountain, the farther trees, and the immense view, were golden and transfigured and at peace. Especially the crucifix stood out, in the glow, against the darker wall.

"'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to Myself,'" murmured the listener: "yet this, if any, is an hour when Christ is taken down from the Cross."

The children kissed their uncle good-night, and went to the house.

"Vergil," said he, turning to the figure who still sat, head shrouded in his cloak, by his side, "I cannot make the thing clearer to you than

these children, in truth, have made it. You had a vision of Æneas setting forth, through separation and sacrifice, to fulfil his destiny and to found Rome. And it is infinitely true that not Æneas, but Rome, is the 'hero' of the 'Æneid.' The triumph is nowhere in his individual life, but in what he stood for, pointed to, and initiated. The thought of the great City broods over his every action, and unifies your poem. Its enclosing walls are the circle of the earth, and the stars are its ramparts, and up and down it move the 'toga'd folk, the Romans, lords of the world'. Even so, his life is released from the limitations of time, and becomes a prophecy; far more, when once we catch how much wider is its reach even than that earthly Rome in which it found, so to speak, its earliest incarnation. For you have put before the soul an ideal, a hope, of such a nature that it immediately suggests a further vision, too good not to be true. *Malgré nous vers le ciel il faut lever les yeux.* 'Æneas was a Catholic.' The sacramental Rome is given us to realize; the soul's Æneid opens out before it, and the soul starts joyously upon it, and joyously speaks the inevitable farewells. Truly inspired was your tenderest lover, Dante, when he pictured you as a man ad-

vancing into darkness, yet with steady foot, and on the royal road to truth, and holding behind him a lantern in whose light the nations might walk, though himself he had not any profit of its rays. Or can it be that you had not any profit. . . . ? Well, there are those who, in the light that blazed out suddenly from your poem, first saw the road, and made thenceforward their renunciations, not in pessimism, nor in cynical disbelief, but with the enthusiasm of one who knows his Latium to exist, and that, in the far end, God will give him Rome. Side by side with a diviner Exile the journey must be made; but to you who first made clear the journey and the goal, what gratitude!"

The poet rose. "There were millions and millions of us," he said with his gentle smile, "of one blood with you over all the earth, groping after God if haply we might find Him, *tendebantque manus ripae ulterioris amore*, stretching out their hands in longing for the farther shore. Well," and as he spoke his dim robes mingled with the twilight, and his voice seemed to be travelling from infinite distances,—

> "Attulit et nobis aliquando optantibus aetas
> Aduentum auxiliumque Dei."

THE TWENTY-FIRSTER.

"And thou *Thyself* for all eternity."

I.

"THAT's a little cat, *I* bet," said the baby, as, from the nursery window-seat, he watched the new dachshund waddle across the stable-yard.

And he flattened his nose and outspread fingers on the glass.

"Oh you little darling!" cried the impetuous Jane Ellen, who helped the nurse. "Wherever he *do* get his expressions from *I* don't know!"

She caught him up and hugged him with enthusiasm. But the small man, indignant, hit out sturdily.

"*Put* me down," he protested. "Naughty Janey, *put* me down. I'm a big boy and I won't be kissed."

Accustomed to these rebuffs, Jane Ellen continued her remarks aloud. A simple and lonely maiden, new to her place, and severely disciplined

by the old nurse and the housekeeper, she often sought in solitary discourse the sense of experience and corroboration, and an element of romance.

"Wherever he do get his expressions from, *I* can't think," she repeated, and immediately decided: "It's all that Mr. Reggie; that's where it is. My, what a fast young man Mr. Reggie must be."

Reginald Orwylstree (you pronounced it Orrelstry) was the baby's adored uncle, now in his second year at Oxford, and responsible (if such a word might with any fitness be applied to him) for most of his nephew's less conventional characteristics.

Jane Ellen's present formulæ had, however, their source in an incident of the preceding afternoon. After the baby's daily walk she had waited outside the library door while Mrs. Andrewes, the nurse, took him in to kiss his mother, a proceeding to which his masculine soul submitted without, I am glad to say, the least reluctance.

"I've been for a ride in the pawk," he announced in penetrating tones.

"Dicky *dear!*" exclaimed his horrified mother. "Say park, not pawk, darling. I can't think where he gets such a dreadful accent from, Mrs.

Andrewes," she added, guiltily conscious of timidity.

"And I can't neither, 'm," said Mrs. Andrewes stiffly; "I shall 'ave to speak to Jyne Ellen."

"The Cockney cat!" thought the indignant listener, and her exclamations of this morning had been intended quite as much to restore her ruffled self-respect, and indeed to augment it by the adaptation of her mistress's phraseology, as to correct the baby.

And so it is clear that not for all that young man's delinquencies was Reggie Orwylstree accountable.

But just at present Reggie was feeling extremely uncomfortable. Last night, at Oxford, he had been returning arm-in-arm with three friends from a twenty-firster, and even the frosty air had failed to clarify the dazing effect of the hot and noisy room. Thus the roadway in St. Giles' (which appeared of enormous width) seemed always a little nearer or more distant than his step had calculated; bright points, indeed, where the moon caught glass or metal, seemed preternaturally bright, but the interstices were correspondingly dim; and his voice, though he felt himself to be singing pretty loud, sounded curi-

ously alien and far off. Just as the four young men turned down between the eminently respectable tavern and the no less respectable residence which flank the tunnel leading into Museum Road, they were singing with much conviction, but (to do them credit) no veracity, the popular rendering of Gounod's marching chorus in "Faust". "*Drunk* last night—*Drunk* the night before——" At this moment the tangle of posts and chains, placed in that narrow passage to deny the way to bicycles, rose suddenly out of the darkness and involved them in inextricable confusion. The third line of the chorus was, in consequence, lost, and when Reggie resumed the fourth—"Never be drunk no more"—his three companions were racing down the road towards the remarkable pile of collegiate architecture which characterises its extremity.

A sense of universal detachment grew upon him. He proceeded slowly, and halted opposite a doorstep, not his own. "*Never* be drunk no more," he repeated seriously.

"Glad to hear it!" said a vague figure, on whom eye-glasses and white muffler shone out with startling emphasis. "May I come in?"

"Evening," said Reggie gravely, and without

moving. "I'm all *right*, you know. *I'm* all right."

"Of course you are," said the other, whom Reggie now saw to be a rather youthful cleric. His expression, annoyed just now, must normally have been pleasant. "But do you mind my getting into my house?"

"It's a dark night," went on Reggie, conversationally. "And we might be miles—miles—away. Know your way about Oxford? My digs are Holywell."

"You don't say so," said the cleric. "Suppose I came along with you?"

"Right O," cried the other, catching his Samaritan's arm; then, with the thunderbolt rapidity of Fate's action, they both slipped on a patch of the winter's first ice, and fell together, the cleric beneath, having strained his ankle rather badly.

In fact, in the excruciating pain peculiar, one would think, to these relatively unimportant accidents, he very nearly fainted. He recovered himself quickly, however, and spoke sharply:—

"Get up, you idiot. It's lucky for us I'm at home. Ring that bell, get the landlady, and help me in."

The youth, seriously sobered, rang, and taking the astounded landlady by the wrist, led her out and pointed to her tenant seated, by now, on the pavement.

"Mr. Mortimer!" exclaimed she. "Never would I have believed it, not if I don't care *who* had told me."

"Don't be silly," he answered. "No—excuse me, Mrs. Barber, but I've strained my ankle and feel very sick. This gentleman will help me into the sitting-room."

Too faint to feel angry, John Mortimer was helped up the steps by a bewildered landlady and a flushed and rather frightened youth in tumbled evening clothes.

From a window above two heads were peering out. "It's the parson Johnny," said one. "And him an R.C., too!"

"Well I *am!*" said the other.

But John did not hear these comments, having, reached by now his sitting-room. This place had the indescribable averageness of the Oxford parlour. The qualities of its furnishing were so obvious that the eye conveyed nothing to the brain, and attention found no stimulus save where a large photograph, tinted a shiny blue and black, showed

the "High Street by Moonlight" to whoso looked, as John did, towards the sofa; and where, over the mantelpiece, a drawing of the late Mr. Barber, presented by his fellow-sidesmen to his relict, turned towards the unimpressive room features wholly in keeping with it. Underneath, however, the legend, "We Mourn our Loss," challenged comment. By the couch, Mrs. Barber's spinster sister, a deeply religious woman, had placed a device of perforated cardboard, upon which Hetty, the handmaid, had been directed to embroider in wool of pale colours "Search the Scriptures," and again, "Thou Shalt Not Make to Thyself Any Graven Image". Mrs. Barber, as a married woman and a landlady, was more tolerant than her sister, and had actually aimed at imparting something of an ecclesiastical air to the apartment. Thus she had placed upon the table a paper-cutter of polished yellow wood, carved indeed with edelweiss, but inscribed "Jerusalem" in Gothic characters. To the mantelpiece she had added a photograph of Mr. Barber's tomb; another, taken from a different angle, stood on a mat of cowrie shells somehow suggestive of missionaries. John stretched himself upon the sofa.

"D'you mind giving me a glass of whisky?"

he said, tossing the anxious youth a key. "In that little cupboard."

"Won't you have another glass yourself?" he added.

The undergraduate looked at John, for a moment, with suspicion. Then without answering, he filled a glass from a syphon and drank it off. This quieted his nerves, but he still said nothing, being a very careful youth.

"I'm awfully sorry," said John; "but now you'll have to help me to bed."

His foot had been bandaged and hartshorned by Mrs. Barber, but he still lay quite white and sick upon the sofa. With some difficulty he was put into a chair and pushed into the small bedroom adjoining, and there he had the unusual experience of being helped into his sleeping-suit by a heated but very penitent undergraduate.

"Quite a Peripeteia," murmured John as he lay down, glancing at him from the corner of his eye.

"Er—really?" answered the undergraduate, mystified.

"A Reversal of Fortune," explained the other: "Aristotle's Poetics. But perhaps you're Science?"

"No," said he. "Do 'em with the Jugger—

er, Jethringham, you know; Balliol. But I don't quite see ——"

"You putting me to bed," said John. "When I met you I was half for offering to do the same good office by you. My insolence bred Nemesis. Good night, and so many thanks!"

Dumb with astonishment, the boy left the house. In the street his head rocked again.

"Jove!" he meditated. "Wonder what he meant exactly. He's a corker, for a parson. But, my hat! I deserve worse!"

A council of his friends, held next morning, while he was still in bed, decided that it was his duty to call, inquire after the ankle and apologize. A cold sponge and much amicable pommeling made him see that this was seriously meant; and thus at eleven o'clock Mrs. Barber, murmuring an indistinguishable name, ushered a solemn youth, immaculate from socks to tie in green and fawn, yellow hair parted with precision, thoroughbred face pink and rigid, into the parlour where John lay upon the sofa.

John realized that the pall of solemnity peculiar to undergraduates when dealing with some ladies and nearly all clergymen had settled on his visitor.

This terrific phenomenon is probably based on the intimate fear of a splendid young animal lest he should give himself away, and it had been seen in one of its varieties last night, when Reggie so gravely assured John of his universal rectitude. But then the balance might have dipped, at any moment, towards wild hilarity, and was tempered, and in part inspired, by the half-belief that he was pulling the parson's leg: now he was panic-stricken lest his own should be pulled. But John resolved only not to help him out.

"Er—I have to apologize ——" began Reggie.

"Please don't," John answered with disconcerting promptness.

"I'm afraid I was certainly a bit on," the other continued doggedly.

"Oh, no," murmured John.

"Isn't there anything I can do for you? D'you know a doctor? Or don't you want books and all that sort of thing?" Reggie racked his brains to conceive the probable taste in literature of a parson.

John said he had all he needed.

"I hope you weren't due to preach anywhere to-day," said Reggie, suddenly inspired. John relented at this real touch of thoughtfulness.

"Thanks awfully," he said. "But I'm not ordained yet. I don't preach. I'm a—well, student: a Catholic, you know."

"I'm sure I beg your pardon," said Reggie, wondering hopelessly whether he had offended the invalid anew. "Have you been long in Oxford?"

"A couple of days. I'm supposed to be reading at the Bodleian," he said, rather ruefully. "But I've only been down from New College a couple of years."

At once the atmosphere was changed. Conversation became coloured with names, with incidents. At last John said:—

"D'you know, I couldn't catch your name when you came in. But it sounded familiar."

Reggie told him.

"Any relation to the Orwylstrees of Orwylstree Hall in Derbyshire?"

"Rather; my brother," Reggie said. "His old uncle died six months ago, and he came in for it. They've only been there a couple of months. D'you know them?"

"Rather," answered John, pleased at the coincidence. "My father has the next place, just over the hill, you know; Holme Place. I used often to come over for the shooting," he added unblush-

ingly, for he liked Reggie and was unanxious to drop the acquaintance.

"So the padre shoots," had been Reggie's first reflection. He immediately invited him over, in his brother's name, for next Christmas.

. . . . . .

In this way John initiated a close friendship with Reggie Orwylstree, and, what proved quite as important, with the baby.

Reggie's twenty years had been passed in considerable comfort. To do things, indeed, rather better than most people, came to him so easily that, through exemption from need of effort, he had never become excellent at anything. Popularity was accordingly his prerogative; but, for lack of startling qualities, he escaped becoming in anything an idol. The limits of his allowance relieved him of mean anxieties, as from the more harassing difficulties proper to the possession of large sums to squander. His information was varied enough to enable him to appreciate allusions, and to write, at need, a creditable page: his tastes were naturally masculine and refined; Plato would have seen in him the result, so far satisfactory, of a first-rate course of Music and Gymnastic.

He had rarely, however, been forced to lead in

anything of even relative importance, and never against odds; his sense of responsibility was rudimentary in proportion: an almost total lack of explicit training in dogma or moral had sent him to Oxford with the horizons of his duties misty, and an ignorance of the religious tendencies of his age positively astounding: tradition and wholesome instinct taught him to be able (he believed) to "draw the line" where it should be drawn; set him shuddering at the sight of anything he felt "bounderish"—though the bounder, were he forced to meet him, he would treat with studious amiability; and left him awestruck, yet faintly recalcitrant, in presence of a Bishop, though extremely respectful of authorities recognized as legitimate.

John, on the other hand, one of a large family which had remained Catholic, and, contrary to the usual fate of such, had established its county position always more securely, had received the traditional education of a large Catholic school, supplemented by a really wise and generous home training. His mind was thus equipped with a defined scheme of beliefs and duties, which he had been taught to see at work in history, and had even tested, quite early, in the travels to which his father had made

a point of initiating all his sons; in consequence, when Reggie, finding instinct insufficient to answer the casuistry of life, would have to make experiments, in John, with his steady moral nerves and sufficiently clear vision, right behaviour (unpurchased by experiments, however well-intentioned, with its opposite) might be relied upon.

And this was probably why Reggie, who had at first found it rather piquant to astonish his friends by being such close pals with a parson, ultimately rested upon John very considerably for direction. John, indeed, who, with the training we have described, had been in an ideal condition to go up to a University, found himself after his four years there, six months' travelling, and a year and a half of theological studies, a sane and usually tactful guide. Once only he had made the mistake of sarcasm. A theatrical photo on Reggie's table had exasperated him. "She's not just anybody," protested the boy; "she's a real star, you know." "Very likely," John wrote to him soon after: "but stars are so indiscriminate, don't you think? Of course I suppose they exist chiefly for the gods, —in a rather dingy heaven, perhaps: but they shine just as kindly on the stalls, where the young

calves live, not to mention the elderly pigs." Though Reggie abolished the photograph, he nearly quarrelled with his friend, and not till the summer of his third year at Oxford did the awkwardness finally disappear.

One evening in that July, the baby came down to the library after tea.

This was a delightful room, the more so for the bleakness of its approach. You entered the first hall, stone and semi-circular, through large glass doors, which, like the windows, had panes here and there of watery purple. It contained nothing but a quantity of coats and furs, a table for cards, and several rigid chairs, blazoned with a coat-of-arms. Flooded with cold light, it might almost have been a swimming-bath. From it you passed into a splendid inner hall, stone too, lit from above by an immense sky-light; a stone staircase with wrought iron banister climbed towards a gallery; in two corners stood white statues of important Orwylstrees of Georgian date, of stupefying hideousness. Three enormous pictures, of which no one could have told you the subject, but which quite probably represented an eighteenth century Mrs. Orwylstree as Ariadne, the mother of the Gracchi, or Boadicea, hid wide stretches of cream-

painted plaster. The new owners of the house had not had time to regenerate this desert.

The oblong library stretched away to your left as you entered from the hall, with a door at each end of each of the long sides. Straight opposite, you might pass into the region of stone corridors and airy offices; at the farther end, into a drawing-room still all faded damasks, dim gold and mellowed whites, and, opposite, the conservatory, whence an unforgetably delicious atmosphere of warm perfume would float out to mingle with that of the worn brown leather with which the library was upholstered. Summer or winter the room was at its best at tea-time, when the sun, streaming through two tall windows, or the ruddy firelight, illuminated the room. Two Ionic pillars, supporting the ceiling at the hall end, framed the room as you turned down it. They were golden-brown, the prevalent tint of the library, with its tawny settees and huge arm-chairs, its walls of books, and, above the shelves, the narrow strip of rich crimson, where alabaster statuettes, cool but not cold, put the only paler touch. Heavily massed flowers—roses in summer, azaleas in the winter— bronze and porcelain ornaments, stood on tables topped with dark marbles behind the

inhabited parts: screens and settees marked these off round fire-place and lamps. A *cosy* room, for all its great size; fragrant and homelike though so stately and sombre and old-fashioned.

In it, then, after tea, several people were watching the baby playing cricket with John's sister, Agnes Mortimer. She was sitting on the floor, batting vigorously with a tea-spoon before a wicket made of three wooden soldiers. Close behind her sat Reggie, keeping wicket, he said. John and Captain Orwylstree stood by the mantelpiece; Mrs. Orwylstree was still at the tea-table, talking to the Vicar, a solemn man, but reputed Broad. His wife, an anxious lady, sat in isolation which she tried to counteract by constant comments on the baby, whose Reggian phraseology certainly provoked them, and by references to domestic parallels.

"What a blessing it is, dear Mrs. Orwylstree," she affirmed, leaning towards her hostess, "when they keep their spirits *high!* Now my own quintette I am constantly striving to keep merry: in *time* and in *season*, of course," she could not help adding.

At this moment the ball bounded towards her. She tried to kick it back discreetly to the baby, but missed.

"*You're* a champion footballer!" he declared, with colossal contempt.

"Am I, dear?" answered the Vicar's wife, patient and sweet. Dicky fled. "Now *my* little Oscar ——" she went on, but Dicky interrupted.

"That's *got* 'er!" he shouted, his next ball having scattered the three soldiers.

Then occurred the incident.

His wickets were put up, in their turn; but Agnes Mortimer bowled him first ball.

The baby pronounced the Athanasian monosyllable.

After Agnes's yelp of laughter an awful moment followed.

Then Reggie broke into it with a howl. "He learnt it in church," he gasped, wickedly, looking at the Vicar.

"But he attaches to it no theological meaning whatsoever," said John, still more wickedly.

"I always think you so *wise*, dear Mrs. Orwylstree," exclaimed the Vicar's wife, rapidly, and with elaborate tact, "to leave this beautiful room unchanged. Now, *my* little drawing-room ——"

But amid hopeless confusion, laughter, rebuke, the astonishment of the infant and his loud cries,

as his father removed him, for Uncle Reggie, the party had broken up. "*Good*-bye, dear Mrs. Orwylstree," said the foiled lady, striving in one voice to express sympathy, disapproval, unconsciousness, social respect, and independence, "such a charming afternoon."

But all that John remembered was that from none but Reggie could the babe have gained this emphatic terminology, and he was astonished that Reggie should have allowed his small worshipper to learn it. Absolutely trivial as the incident was in itself, it left it clear that Reggie, careless, now, of self-discipline in his own interests, troubled his head not at all to know whom he influenced, or how, and followed his pleasant paths all irresponsibly. He wondered whether the devotee might not, some day, be involved in the ruin of an idol that had feet of clay.

In November he wrote to Reggie the following letter:—

DEAR R.—Just a line to say I've been home for a week-end, and walked over to O. Your brother and his wife have come home, and meanwhile the Hall's been done up. Really, you wouldn't know it. The infant has also returned from his great-

aunt's at Ramsgate. Ramsgate! At any time of the year, you know—but in November really beyond the limit. On arriving he marched into the library and announced: "This is London: London's *all* right: give me London". Then he seized a bit of embroidery and said: "This is a petticoat: '*Put* me among the girls'". You know, that idiotic song he learnt from you, I suppose, last vac. An ever-mysterious Providence, which has dispensed him from resembling you in feature, has arranged that in drawl, in coolness, and intellectual outlook (if you've got such a thing) he's grown exactly like you. He's still tolerable, just, though. Good luck, *mon cher*. Remember me to Donald.—Yours, J. F. M.

The flippant John, who had yet thought over every line of his letter, and had indeed taken it with him to the chapel before posting it, obtained results beyond anything he had dreamed.

Reggie found it waiting for him on his arrival at Oxford after an evening and a night spent in London. He read it in a boat on the Upper River in the afternoon. He had gone to town with a friend, risking many things: not the things

he feared had fallen upon him, but all that he had thought impossible. "I know where to draw the line . . . " well, as the sparkling evening had advanced, that knowledge grew confused. "Why *here?* Why *now?* Why not a little farther on?" And then a restive straining: "*Why* draw it at all, to-night? Usually, yes. But real *will* is its own master to draw or not to draw, just as it pleases!" And, finally, a throwing overboard of will and thought, and a riotous descent into Avernus.

Then, on awaking, disgust; disillusion. Nothing that he had most firmly believed of himself true! he had never been what he had fancied; innocent in act, yes; yet not through positive value, essential reliability. Now not even that; a record irretrievably altered; a past fact indelible. And what guarantee, then, for the future? If the instincts, the ideals, the education, the habits of the past had borne no better fruit than this, what new element was to enter *himself*, and whence, to make the future certainly different?

As he sculled very quietly in the tepid autumn afternoon, for the first time in his life he recognized his individual self.

It was a real discovery, and he must be forgiven

if his thoughts, fresh to him, sound, to the expert in introspection, platitudinous.

He felt, first, extraordinarily aloof. *He* was there, at a centre; round him were boat, and sliding water dark above weeds bowed in the current, broad yellow poplar leaves, slender yellow willow leaves sliding with it: stumpy willows fringing immense meadows; tow-path and hawthorn hedge; North Oxford grey-red to the right; the doleful barge, just ahead of him, at the curve; *he* held them together, grouped them, appreciated them by his thought and mood: to no other person in the world were they just now looking and feeling just like that. He realized with a gasp of conviction, what had always seemed so silly in the clever essays, that *I am I*. And of that *I*, vast epochs—childhood, boyhood, half his Oxford life (so unique, so significant!) gone, irrevocable, vanished without his being aware of them, even in memory scarcely to be recaptured. Life had streamed past like this grey water bowing the weeds. Or he had floated, like these leaves (here he became half-conscious of a tendency to the minor-poetic), just not merely obeying the current because just not *merely* nothing in themselves. Yet precious little! he reflected.

Certainly not enough to deflect the sliding waters; only enough to give a certain personality to their common, necessary direction.

And as suddenly he was conscious that others too were *selves;* and with this, he perceived the different settings in which these selves evolved. He had a sort of vision, or series of visions, of these sorts of lives—the life at this Oxford, with its amazing anomalies of old and new, its motor-cars throbbing beneath the eyes of old statues perched on steeples that looked like fountains frozen into stone: its wines in rooms where what different thoughts had been alive, centuries ago, as what strange occupants had looked out of the self-same windows: the gay river, and the solemn chimes; the green and grey of the quadrangles, bewilderingly unchanged; and the schoolrooms where the restless, prisoned, extravagant intellect of man tortured God's creations into what new philosophies! And the life of Orwylstree, with its dim and damask drawing-rooms and old libraries. . . . Yet it too was changing, and remodelling its look; passing from owner to owner, and already insisting on a future, when a baby's voice was loud in its corridors. This eternal mystery of permanence in change appalled the

young man: and added to it came this sense of isolation and yet the certainty of interaction. *He* saw *himself*, yet he knew he modelled Dicky's self: Dicky too would one day see his own self as central, as segregated, as eternally *one* for good or ill; yet how much of him would be Reggie!

He wrote that night to John. His letter ended thus. "I've been a cad, but a fool even more. I've risked making a mess of things for Dicky, but chiefly because I'd no conception of what I was myself, or what I was shaping into, or that I was shaping him. What I feel is, what's going to alter things? If there's one thing I see, it's this. Add up tradition and education and what you like; and price your own assets, instinct, views, ideals and all that, as high as you can; and *yet* it's not enough to make you sure of yourself. And it's helpless to put things straight if you've crocked them. And then, one suddenly comes to an end long before other things do. That's what puts me in the bluest funk. Isn't there something that can ensure things being straightened out? or prevent the results of one's own idiocy? or prevent one's *being* an idiot? You'll have to suggest a new element, I'm afraid, because I don't

see anything in this old Cosmos as we know it. Don't be afraid, old man, but speak out."

For Reggie had guessed that yet another sort of life must be that which John was leading, and an immense suspicion rose up and looked him in the face.

Over Reggie's letter John first smoked a pipe and then prayed with some awe.

GOD'S ORPHAN.

I.

"For thee this twinèd coronal, O my Queen,
Have I with mine own hands decked out; to thee
I bear it from a mead inviolate,
Where shepherd ne'er was bold to feed his flock,
Nor ever came the scythe; inviolate,
In the sweet spring the bee roams there at will;
And for its gardener hath it Purity
And running waters: only they whose heart
Is wholly sinless in despite of all,
Nor cherish chastity by rote and rule,
'Tis these alone have law to pluck its flowers.
So, dearest Lady, deign for thy golden hair
To take this garland from my virgin hand:
For I alone of all the world have right
To live near thee, to hear and answer thee,—
Hear thy dear voice, e'en when I see thee not—
And may I end life's race as I begin."

—Euripides, "Hippolytus."

MENANDRION was sitting in the water-garden, and here, at least, the Egyptian afternoon was cooled.

This garden was, in reality, no more than a great cistern, some twenty feet by twelve, down one long side of which, and across the ends, ran a cemented pathway fenced by a very high wall. Over this wall the sunlight streamed through a fence of feathery trees, acacia, tamarisk, and weeping willow, and made a pattern of faint shadow, crossed with reflections from the water, over the lower part of the pylon opposite, whose blazing slope, plunging sheer into the pool, enclosed the garden on its fourth side. The water slid into the cistern from beneath this pylon, and escaped at the farther limit of the parallelogram, where the side wall left a space of about six feet from the end. A trellis filled this gap, and over it vines were trailed. Here alone the sun had a free access, making a glory of transparent green and gold, warmly illuminating that part of the enclosure. The light, else, was almost all reflection, a light floating ubiquitous, creating a jewel-like atmosphere of delicate incandescence. For not only did the roses and the jasmine-tufts that topped the wall, catch the sunlight and hold and radiate it until they blazed like little suns themselves, but, in the strong beams reflected from the pylon-face, even the innumerable flowers that

stood in the high wall's shadow found their bells filled with a soft radiance that made them half-transparent, like dim gems, pearl and opal, where veiled fires slumber. Iris glowed there, with an intricate tracery of veins, blue, lilac and deep crimson, on the milky surface, or wholly an imperial purple and rich gold: hyacinths, grey-blue, and elusive pink; periwinkles, stars like the evening sky, ghostly against dark leaves; gladiolus; anemones, magnificent once more, sombre glories at the end of their fine stems. And on the surface too of the water, the same phantom colours burned; the flower-cups of the lotus, translucent blue and pink. But the miracle, the magic of that atmosphere was beyond doubt the work of the thousand crossing lights, light striking against the sun's direction, light streaming upwards from the water, light lingering in the shadows like a pulse of life. And at times living glories would dart, dragon-flies in armour of lapis-lazuli and emerald, over water itself like one huge sapphire, unfathomable, crystalline at the surface, infinite deep blue below, the *dolce color d'oriental zaffiro*. This, time and time again, the inspiration of Israel had placed beneath the feet of Jehovah's throne, " work of bright sapphire stone, as it were

the very heaven for clearness". But to-day, the heaven in the water was sapphire: overhead it was a firmer colour, pure turquoise.

And in this magic garden Menandrion sat out the afternoon, holding himself a little primly, lest any motion of curiosity or unguarded idleness should ruffle the careful calm, the "recollection," which were to guard the hours that carried him toward the great initiation. For it was now ten years since to that temple-home of the great mother Isis, his own mother had brought him, a solemn little lad of four, attired in a necklace, and his side-lock plaited fine like any prince's! She, poor woman, on whom fate had pressed hard and harder, robbing her of husband and five children, one by one, had determined to bring this son, her last, and offer him to the motherly goddess, acting on the blind instinct that somehow the sacrifice must be complete—that she must rightly be broken down, made dust of—that, separated from her, mere stuff for suffering, the little one might live and thrive, the universal mother's baby; might become her initiate,—some day, perhaps, her priest. . . . And, dumbly sorrowing, she had gone back to the brute work at the mill, following with increasing passion the violent rituals of the popular

feast cycle, visiting from time to time the temple with gifts of lotus and lily for the goddess; even her poor bracelets and ankle-rings she brought, putting them, for Isis, into the hands of the little acolyte, who had been promoted to a kind of sacristanship with ritual of shrine-sweeping and altar-decking, done gravely and with a sense that God was being served. But it was two years before he had come to do even these tiny tasks, and she had changed in that time; and since they never spoke, the lad looked with eyes always more wondering and distant at this silent woman, his mother too, somehow, but who lived there outside, excluded from the diviner Mother's home. And when she died, his only problem faded: no tie, however thin, held his thoughts and loves to that phantom-world: he was the elect, the favourite; the denizen of a celestial atmosphere in which nothing mattered but the shaping of his life to merit the crowning union.

For it must be realized that long before the second Christian century, when Menandrion lived, the worship of Isis was rapidly ceasing, even in its outer circles of devotees, to present those crude and naturalistic features which it had shared with the other gods and goddesses of the Osiris story.

It could be coarse enough, all that old symbolism, all the staging of the story of the Good Being, of Osiris, slain and rent in pieces by Evil, searched for with tears by Isis, his sister-spouse, and reigning a mysterious new life in the Hidden Place. Thither all souls passed in at last, only to emerge condemned by the enemy's final accusation, to "second death," or called through a long purgatory to identification with the pure God, themselves become Osiris. For most men, there can be no doubt, the ethical value, and even the beautiful human character of the story,[1] had for centuries remained latent.

It was at Alexandria, and in the hands of the Ptolemies, that the ancient religion was recast; or rather, was so stated, largely in terms of Orphic and Dionysiac mysticism, that all its potential sublimity was evoked into act. The development swayed this way and that; there were temporary reversions; arrested energies; sporadic effort. The Trinity of Isis, Horus, and the foreigner Serapis, "who holds the beginnings and ends of all

[1] How much is not suggested by the fact that Nephthys, the sister of Isis and the *spouse of the evil principle, Set*, was always the close companion of the sorrowing goddess in her search for the mutilated body of Osiris?

things in his hands," had a wide triumph. But mainly in the person of Isis could old and new unite, most venerable from her ancient worship, even as most alluring to all forms of later religious craving, Roman and Greek alike. For the common folk, over and above the old and touching story, the death of the loved one, the search, the suffering, and the joy; over and above the solace and ideal of motherhood, triumphant in virginity as over widowed grief, came the frankly human elements of bright and varied ritual, a famous feature being the mystic boat, brightly decorated, escorted at first by a whole flotilla of pleasure skiffs, carrying out the goddess over the spring sea to summon back the flowers and happiness of a new year. At the early dawn, there was the *salutatio*, the *levée*, the waking of the goddess to the sound of flutes, the drawing of her white curtains: sacrifice filled the day, from the altar and temple gates priests gave the blessing of the sacred Nile-waters, their shoulders covered with the veil that shrouded the holy flask. And in the evening, the worshipper would look back to where the statue showed pale behind distant lamps, and breathe "Good-night," before he left the sanctuary. At times the temple would still stand open, and the "*incubatio*,"

the ritual sleeping before the shrine, would be observed; but this was of bad report in the Isiac worship; and the ebb and flow of passion, and even deliberate malice, made it a stone of scandal. Still, it was here that in dream or waking vision the kind goddess was held to make her presence most intimately felt.

But for the inner groups of worshippers the ascetic and mystical side of the cult was increasingly developed; absolute purity in mind and flesh was paramount; poverty, fasting, study and prayer were here cardinal virtues; the recurring Osirid legend, here ever more refined, carried the soul through memories of sorrow into a Hidden Place of dim joys and remote peace, which drew the veil of its sanctity over all the sensible world and blunted violent emotions. And what was true for the simpler devotee was accentuated here; the *personality* of Isis, her motherhood tender even as her splendour was august, made the cell of the anchoret a home, in which the grating was unnecessary to keep him from a return to the outside world.

In this calm retreat, becoming yearly more strict, it was this ascetic and mystical side of his religion that Menandrion studied. Daily the

head priest of the temple would mount to the boy's room, which looked out only on to sky, and contained nothing but a mattress of palm-fibre with a wooden pillow for the head, and a low table covered with papyrus-rolls. On one side, however, was a painted relief, showing Isis and her sister, and between them the dead Osiris; and here the instructions passed.

The priest, Menandrion remembered, as he dreamt back, that afternoon, over his long novitiate, had early taken him into his confidence, and told him the story of his own godless youth, of his miraculous cure of mind and body, of his heroic self-dedication out of gratitude. "To this harbour of peace, to this altar of mercy," he had concluded, his voice trembling, "did I then reach, dear lad, not by right of birth or rank, nay, nor of knowledge, but through the sorrows that were the prize of my youth's slippery path. They say Fate is blind! Well, her malice, if such it was, most certainly was ignorant of its end, since by that road of peril and racking pain she brought me to this religious state."

The day of cruelty was over, he concluded, "for to the detriment of those whose lives the majesty of our goddess has vindicated to herself,

there is no room for evil chance. They have been admitted into the patronage of a Destiny that is not blind, who with her glorious light irradiates all heaven. Happy day, when I clothed myself in the white habit of the goddess my salvation, and gave in my name to that holy warfare wherein of old I fought not, yet by whose vows I was one day to be bound; when for the first time I dedicated myself to the obedience of our religion, and underwent the voluntary yoke of its ministry. For when first we begin to be the goddess's servants, then do we the more realize the profit of our new liberty!"

At such hours Menandrion would eagerly beg to be admitted to the vows; but the old priest, of repute for his cult of a sober worship, would gently check the lad, as a father might quiet his children's hasty desires, and would remind him that while the hour of better hope was bound to come, yet the day of initiation, the very priest who was to receive the vows, the very details of the cost of the ceremony, must first be revealed by the goddess in vision.

"We must bear patiently with all these details," he said: "we must be on special guard against impulsiveness as against obstinacy; we

must avoid both extremes; and while we must not keep our vocation waiting, neither must we rush boldly in before we are called. No one," he said, solemnly, "can be so deliberately mad, so fain of certain death, as, by a presumptuous sacrilege, to take on himself the ministry without explicit summoning of the goddess made known to himself. It would mean death! For into her hands are given the gates of hell no less than the keeping of salvation. Your own self-oblation is so to be enacted as to be a kind of voluntary death, whence prayer only may win a rescue; for lo! those to whom the great Silences of our religion may in safety be committed, must needs pass through the time-spaces of their life, and set their foot on the very threshold of this finite light; and only the power of the goddess may bring them back, and dispose them, in a mysterious manner born again by her providence, to run once more the race of salvation. You too, my dear lad," he continued, "must patiently wait for the heavenly bidding, though assuredly it is by the peculiar and most evident condescension of the high divine Will that you have been so long set apart for the blessed work, and can even now abstain from profane and sinful meats, even as the other of the devout,

that you may the more directly penetrate to the innermost secrets of our most pure religion."

Menandrion, now slowly walking up and down the cemented path beside the water, did his best to reconstitute these experiences, still careful, however, lest any quick or aimless movement should ripple the mirror of his memory, or disturb the current of quiet emotion. For it was not a fortnight since the priest had received intimation of the date of the boy's initiating, and for ten days he had been in close retreat, speaking to none save the old director, eating no meat, praying and reading. The retreat had begun with a kind of baptism in a pure font, while the temple chants had been sung, and the sacred liturgy read in the old Egyptian language. But now the "recollection" into which he had sunk himself lay too deep to be disturbed by the rhythm of his walk. He paced regularly up and down the water-garden, a slim figure, hips and shoulders perhaps too undeveloped, temples a little sunken, eyes a little tired from vigil and insufficient food; but his skin shone healthy and copper-coloured in the afternoon light: a skirt of white linen fell from waist to ankles: on his arms and ankles plain gold rings gleamed.

And all about him brooded the divine presence, conscious and unbroken communion with which was perhaps the main object of his training. For the slowly developing, assimilative religion of Egypt had ended by evolving a gigantic system, metaphysical and ascetic, in which God and Universe met; man and all things finite, if not already God, were tending, through the stream of phenomena, towards a divine unity. Isis, the all-mother, had declared, "I am all that hath been, and is, and is to be," though through her veil no mortal yet had penetrated to full knowledge. Osiris, by a quaint etymology, offered by a reverence which did not forbid a smile, was the sum of holiness of God and nature, the ἱερὸν and ὅσιον in one. Isis, again, since life essentially passed by way of thought to knowledge, was named from εἰδέναι, to know. In terms of thought even the divine history was to be interpreted. Osiris was the sacred Word, torn asunder and obscured by the serpent Sin: Isis reconstituted, for her lovers, the unity of the divine plan. Their life and death was shaped wholly in view of this. "It is in our souls," had said the priest, "that we must carry about and adorn the holy Word, as in a shrine. Then shall we be true priests and

worshippers. And in death," he had only that morning reminded Menandrion, "your corpse will still wear the holy habit you hope to receive to-morrow, to show that the Word is ever with you, and that with It, and no other possession, you are to go Thither. For even as in life there is no more awful gift for God to give or for man to take than truth, so without thought and knowledge of all that is, Immortality would be no life, but merely endless time." And for the summing up of the high doctrine, he had said, "this thing that our priests to-day, with prayer for mercy, and in dim revelation, most reverently do hint, even that Osiris is King and Lord among the dead, bewilders the minds of most men who know not how the truth of this thing is. For they fancy that Osiris, in whom most surely is all holiness of God and nature, is thus said to be in the earth and beneath the earth, where are hidden the bodies of those that seem to have had their end. But Osiris' self is far indeed from earth, untouched, undefiled, immaculate of all being that admits of corruption and of death. And souls of men, here in the embrace of bodies and of passions, have no communion with the God save as in a dream, a dim touch of knowledge through Philosophy.

But when they are set free, and shift their home unto that Formless and Invisible and Impassible and Pure, then in truth is God their leader and their king, even this God, so that cleaving to Him and insatiably contemplating and desiring that Beauty ineffable, undescribable of man (wherewith the old legend would have it that Isis was in love and did ever pursue It and with It consort), all beings there are fulfilled of all the good and fair things that have share in creation."

This meditation created a silence about Menandrion, an equipoise of faculties, a suspension, as it were, of time itself. Aware of all around him, of the beauty, the jewelled light and water, he held himself away from it all; symbols they were, vehicles, of God; they were fleeting, not to be rested in, for all their beauty; nay, from the very *mood* they fostered he withdrew himself—that was not yet the ultimate and underlying Reality! An amazing aloofness encrystallized him; far, easily enough, from coarse thoughtless use and wont, he was detached even from the spiritual states which the souls of things inspired, from the very joy with which God in them was to be recognized, saluted and adored. In this way he tried to cleave to the Invisible and Unthinkable,

led to it by sense and soul, but never in these making his rest. His whole being, therefore, hung in this extraordinary interspace by a single thread; the reality, assumed throughout, of the divine essence which was claiming him. Only the wonderfully rapid development of this detachment had kept him from the passions which had their normal dwelling-place in a soul so keenly conscious of beauty, natural or spiritual. But even the spiritual passions were unreal for him.

Kneeling that night on the summit of the pylon, he watched the splendid moon making "long glories" of the Nile, then in flood, and filling with misty light the cistern far below him. It was the last time he was to look on Isis till he saw her, he trusted, in an initiate face to face. The theology of his day, never arrogant to define, fastening on great principles which it was not anxious or inquisitive to justify in detail, told him this moon was Isis, and he did not ask *how*. Stretching out his arms, "Queen of Heaven," he prayed, reciting the long litany of names whereby the one essence was invoked all over the world, "by whatsoever title, ceremony, or symbol we are right to call on thee, help me at this hour, confirm my weakness, give me an end of change and chance, bring me

peace." And interwoven with his prayer, he recognized the assent of the goddess, a mother who was yet a Queen; that she was there, touched by his entreaty, parent of all nature, lady of the elements, firstborn of the ages, crown of godhead, queen of the Hidden World, first in heaven, unific vision of gods and goddesses, at her nod governing the luminous towers of the sky, the healthful breezes of the sea, the lamentable silences of hell, to whose single Power in myriad name and rite the universe did homage. . . . And again the divine geography unrolled itself before him, the dark world starred with altars responsive to the holy ray of moonlight. She was there, most pitiful; she was there, favourable and propitious. Tears, grief, sorrow of all sorts were now no more for him. In her providence his day of salvation had dawned. At that one moment, while her spirit breathed about him, she was also everywhere, dispensing the world in his favour. Only he felt this admonition stealing like cold fire through his veins, stirring his hair: "Let him utterly remember it, let him hold it deeply hidden in his heart, that all the remaining course of his life was pledged to her, down to the very limit of his latest breath,—justly, since by her grace he lived, and his life was to be happy, nay,

glorious, beneath her tutelage ; and when he should have measured to an end the allotted span, and gone to the land of the dead, there in that hollow heart of earth should he catch vision of her, shining across the gloom, Queen even in that inner realm of Hades ; and at last, in the heavenly fields, he should be ever at her side, and she would be gracious to him, and he should adore her. . . ."

From that prayer onwards all was ecstasy for Menandrion, an ecstasy in which he preserved to an incredible extent that sensuous and spiritual detachment which was his ideal, and his supreme method. Unconscious, almost, of his surroundings, he was led from shrine to shrine, till in a tiny cell, the very heart of the temple, the priest left him. In absolute silence and darkness he stood, at first, hands rigid to sides. Soon, he lay flat on his face. Emptier and emptier he strove to make mind and will. Faint images of ritual observance flickered on his retina : sistra tinkled in his head, as at an immeasurable distance. Half-sentences from sacred books rocked in his brain,—"I give my heart to what He saith, nor hesitate at what He doth determine. . . . O glowing Feet coming out of the darkness, O Lord of Purity, I have not blasphemed. . . . O Eye in His Heart . . ." But silence of

thought returned. The Eye looked at him in the darkness, but he attended to nothing.

The end came quite abruptly. Menandrion sank into a profound sleep.

He seems to have reached—if we must explain him—the verge of the high climb to nothingness, to have overstepped it, and, in the sudden relaxation of all mind and body, the natural result immediately followed. Sleep possessed him, permeating his whole being, sleep absolutely dreamless, absolute peace.

Others, in his place, might well not have had this experience. According to character, training, fervour, the phenomena differed. Hysteria, madness even, might have been the doom of some. Many, after an hour that seemed eternity, would have slept through sheer exhaustion. Had they watched, they might have seen, through a panel sliding in the wall, a dim company of shades, faintly luminous, around a central figure, itself elusive, but recognized by the crown of horns enclosing Moon. Sistra would have rattled, softly at first, then with a crash, as the light grew dazzling; then blackness and silence, absolute and sudden, would have ended the vision. Next day, an ineffaceable impression would be found to have been

left upon the system: the revelation of the night, interpreted by the priest, brooded over by the lip-sealed initiate, would have kneaded into the very substance of the brain a whole history of divine intercourse, a whole sequel of miraculous privilege and duty. "I trod," wrote one of them, speaking what he dared, "on the very threshold of death, whereunto I had journeyed; and then across the elements did I return; at midnight beheld I the white splendour of the sun in his blazing; gods of heaven and hell I approached and stood before them and adored them face to face. And now that you have heard my tale, yet can you never understand it."

For Menandrion it was simpler. In the moment of his awaking, he was conscious as of light, cool and green, all about him. He rose rapidly from unfathomable depths, his limbs incredibly rested, brain and heart in complete repose. He woke to find the roof of the cell slid back; the keen morning air poured in upon him, and at his side stood the priest, smiling and holding out his arms.

Menandrion fell at his feet, and bowed his head beneath a sea of awe that hushed his soul to stillness.

The very physical peace testified to an experience of divine joy that was rightly outside the normal memory or understanding. The *result* alone could be grasped. He had touched the Goddess; he was hers; nay, she his.

. . . . . .

The last act of the drama was quickly played. Led by a secret staircase to the public part of the temple, he was taken to a small room high up behind the altar. There he was dressed in a long white robe and a richly embroidered cloak. He held a taper in his right hand; palm-leaves wreathed his head. Through a small door he stepped on to the veiled niche above the altar where the Goddess stood, and placed himself immediately before her statue. Then the white silk curtains drew apart, and across the haze of taper-flames, he could see, in the cavernous gloom, the pale and up-turned faces of the crowd.

An immense cry greeted the appearance of the majestic statue, and close before it, the slender figure of a boy, rigid in sacred vestments, his face blanched by the candle-glare.

For the first time, Menandrion's head swam. He felt he was in a dream.

A week later, and he was kneeling before the shrine, bidding adieu to the dear Goddess in that ever-memorable temple. He was destined to the service of her famous Iseion in Smyrna, and was to start to-morrow. He made his last prayer.

"O thou most holy and eternal saviour of the human race, and ever most munificent in thy tender care of mankind, unto the hazards of our sorrow thou givest the sweet affection of a mother. Nor doth any day nor any night's repose, nay, nor tiny moment vanish past empty of thy benefits, but ever on earth and sea thou art protecting men, driving aside life's tempests, stretching forth thy right hand of salvation. The threads of our life, by us inextricably tangled, thou dost untwine; thou stillest storms of fate, thou holdest the evil goings of the stars. Thee Heaven doth worship: the shades are thy servants: 'tis thou dost spin the world, and lightest up the sun, and governest the universe, and tramplest upon hell. To thee the stars make answer, for thee the seasons return, heaven's powers exult, the elements obey. At thy nod blow the breezes, clouds give fertility; thine is the germing of the seed, and the growth of the germ. Before thy majesty the birds do tremble whose goings are in the air, and the beasts that

haunt the hills, and the serpents lurking in the dust, and the monsters that swim in the ocean. But I, scant of soul for the offering of thy praise, poor of wealth for the celebrating thy sacrifices, feeble of voice for telling out my heart's knowledge of thy Majesty—nay, nor would one thousand mouths, one thousand tongues suffice, nor the long roll of an eternal lauds—I, what in my poverty my worship alone can do, that will I care to effect. Thy divine Countenance and most holy godhead stored within my heart of hearts will I for ever keep, and there will watch, there picture it. Farewell, divine Mother."

And he left the shrine.

II.

"Fear came upon me, and trembling.
Which made all my bones to shake.
Then a breath passed over my face;
The hair of my flesh stood up.
It stood still, but I could not discern the appearance thereof;
A form was before mine eyes:
Silence—and a voice!"

WHAT might have been Menandrion's fate had he remained in the Egyptian temple, it is hard to

prophesy. Possibly he would have reached, as had his master, an old age of placid piety, the crises of mystical experience becoming rarer and less acute. Certainly, the calamity which was the immediate result of his departure for Smyrna would have affected him but gradually, if indeed it had ever overtaken him at all.

But the spiritual development of a devotee could in no case have been a simple process. Souls were from their origin of very various quality, and, in so subjective a transaction as was the Isiac initiation, it was no absolute amount, as it were, of mystical impulse that was infused into each during the great night.

Violent reactions from spiritual exaltation to sensual depravity were probably rare : occasions for the morbid oscillation between scourge and debauchery (continual, for instance, in the case of the wandering priests of Cybele) would have been lacking in those quiet temples. The psychological equilibrium would mostly maintain itself, sinking however, in most cases, from plane to plane of spiritual values, from the level where great dangers were the condition of high achievement, to that of the daily round of duties and taboos, observed without intense conviction even as against no

great interior opposition. In some souls the sordid instincts of the money-making priest would emerge; trickeries would be resorted to, and the lash of insincere popular excitement: vice would lie nearer to such natures, doubtless; though not as a relief to nerves unendurably irritated by devotional excesses, but as the natural resort of low organisms.

Menandrion's case, least of all, was simple. He had sought, as we have shown, to regard the universe as a purely negative system, in which all his wonderfully refined powers of sense and soul were at stretch, intensely appreciating the loveliness of environment, the sublimity of doctrine, only the more fully and consciously to reject them in favour of the invisible, unthinkable Fact which was the ultimate. The process was almost one of magic: into a soul evacuated of sense, and reasoning, and desire, the divine *must*, by an essential law, flow. To trust to thing or thought as effective of that union would have been presumption. To trust to the method as infallibly efficacious was perhaps not presumption, since the method was held to be essentially involved in the natures of the Divine and of the soul. In the event, therefore, of God or soul being other than he conceived them (if

God, for instance, were not wholly antagonistic to the created; and if the soul were incapable of annihilation to all save the pure substance of the Divine), Menandrion would have been attempting an impossible feat of spiritual acrobatics, have been seeking (if we may use a grotesque image) to climb out of his world into the vacuum above it, and there to hold himself suspended by his own hair.

And if we be inclined to assume that this was indeed his case, we have perhaps an explanation of the extraordinarily rapid failure of the habits of years to withstand the first attack they experienced. First, Menandrion had never achieved a real and fundamental separation from his world and from himself. The condition of the very aloofness in which he sought to live was a certain connexion with what he shunned, as a man may hold an object away from him at arm's length, but still he holds it. Once relax the strain of repulsion, and world of sense, and soul, and self would rush back upon the devotee. Next, after the initiation, he believed something positive for the first time in his life to have been effected: the substantial contact had been established; he could rely on that; permanence of that was what alone mattered. In one single new soul-attitude, therefore (now that

he believed himself fixed and safe), he abandoned the ascetical exercise of repulsion, and flung his whole weight on to a fabric which he believed to be alone substantial, but, which, in the event, seems to have proved unreliable. He thought he could, and only needed to live by the life imbibed in that hour of mystical identification with the divine. He tired nerves and brain in trying to reconstitute the mode of being peculiar to that great night: probably without the respite of a single day, he fell crashing, quite unconsciously, to the bed-rock below him from the mid-air of a false psychological position.

Certainly the catastrophe occurred long before he was aware. Only, cold winds seemed at times to blow through his walls; he had vanishing flashes in which he seemed to himself to be resting on the ground he thought to have quitted for ever. It revealed the inexperience of the prevalent asceticism, that he should have been despatched so soon to the excitements of voyage and new home; still more, that the old priest Theon should have remained to the end ignorant of the essential fragility of the boy's spiritual system. But most of all calamitous was it that his companion chanced to be the priest of an Isis temple sufficiently distant

to explain Theon's knowing of him only his name. Bound himself for Ephesus, he had passed through Theon's temple on his way north, and to his care the old man had gladly confided the acolyte. They travelled, for poverty's sake, on a slow coasting vessel, and the journey lasted many hot days.

The priest's unspirituality was from the first apparent. Easily flustered by hurry or small *contretemps*, he dropped at once, in such moments, the easy smile and devout phrase with which he usually approached Menandrion, anxious lest the boy should send adverse testimony of him to the influential Superior. And the insincerity apprehended in this priest, was what first condensed, into an all-but impalpable consistency, the cold atmosphere floating round about Menandrion; bringing the sickening impression that there was unreality somewhere, along with the religion—that his own life might be knit up with a lie. Not yet definitely conscious of this fear, Menandrion would none the less feel, at times, an unexplained sick fluttering over his heart: he fled from it to the cabin, and prayed painful prayers before the little picture, riveting to it the thought which he could still easily control, but only, as it were, from with-

out; the interior impulse fainted, and his soul shuddered.

There was another influence, a breeze not chill, this time, so much as anxious, intermittent, chopping the surface of recollection into irritability. A man, leaning against the bulwarks, kept looking at Menandrion, and appeared constantly to repress an impulse to speak to him. He was well-dressed, making it curious that he should care to sail in this poor boat. His expression was so contradictory as of itself to catch idle attention. Evidently a man of the world, he yet had the look inseparably associated with certain priests; on the defensive, yet complacent; mundane, yet aloof, as of one who lived prosperously on his known connexion with other-world mysteries. Lines in his face betokened extreme sensitiveness and versatility; but the lips were coarse, and might at any time let loose, in place of their wonted cynical smile, a revolting laugh. The eyes were tired, for all their boldness. This was Lucian of Samosata, "spoilt" artist, statesman, mystic; victim of hard circumstance, of a career that blighted the soul while it developed wit; tricked, first and last, by the original base metal in his mixture, making it impossible for him to live up to the high instinct,

the dreams that had been his and which still hung about him, heavy clouds in which elusive lightning flickered.

With the occasionally enforced economy of a society man, Lucian was travelling by this merchant boat to Paphlagonia, where he was to study, and if possible expose, the religious outbreak connected with the name of Alexander of Abonoteichus. His eye at once fastened on Menandrion's Isiac habit, and the itch of the iconoclast, the passion to destroy, to maul, seized and shook him. Also the obvious innocence of the boy's face angered him. It belied his doctrine of priestly depravity; pity for the Ascetic was the only pose left to him in face of manifest purity, and professions of pity really did not suit him. They were too cheap to be effective. Well, he would spoil it too, this innocence, the gods helping him. He chuckled over the devout phrase, impiously used. But there was more than innocence in that face; suffering had given it a positive quality, holiness; and here Lucian shrank: the cursed conscience was not dead; it tugged him this way and that; there was fear, remorse, horror at the thought of the boy's agony when he should find himself to have faith and purity no more. Thus

he could not wholly bring himself to the attack, till Menandrion, nerves exasperated by these half movements, plunged into talk.

"I am for Smyrna, sir," he said. "And you?"

"For Paphlagonia, my friend," said Lucian, calmed at once by speaking. "My name is Lucian of Samosata, of whom you will scarcely have heard." His vanity prompted the remark. It was obvious that the rhetorician's tawdry fame would not have reached this recluse's sanctuary: but Lucian was essentially an actor, and he played his airs and modest graces for the applause of an imaginary audience, never absent.

Menandrion's confession of ignorance struck out a gibe which, again, only that audience would have appreciated.

"You are travelling of course with the venerable priest. His son?"

The boy reddened, but simply took Lucian's unawareness of the Isiac vow for granted. Far, therefore, from supposing an insult, he realized the opportunity, so early offered, of doing work for the high religion, and of winning this soul to the goddess.

"I am Menandrion son of Menander," he said simply. "Mithrobeches is priest of Isis, and does not wed."

He eagerly explained his position, recounted his history. Lucian at first listened closely, morbidly fascinated by the spiritual beauty revealed. Here was stuff to spoil! Here were lilies that should rot! But incapable of maintaining a mental attitude, even bad, for long, he grew wearied at last, and took to watching the vanishing whirlpools left by the oars as they picked themselves out of the water. But at least, he remembered, here might be matter for a new "Dialogue". He pulled himself together.

"Beautiful," said he, "and most interesting. Alas! my old eyes cannot hope to see the levels where your boy's feet stand."

"But the goddess," said Menandrion, "is always powerful to help a man to climb; to leave the low valleys and the herd," he added, using without insincerity his ascetical *cliché*.

"The herd!" thought Lucian, now frankly amused. "So I belong to the herd. This is refreshing." But after a moment of silence, his emotions vibrated to the thought that there was truth here . . . was it unjustified, that unmeant corollary attached to the boy's words? He returned to the attack.

"And are you happy," he said, "at the top of your mountain?"

A week ago the answer would have been in terms of rapture. As it was, Menandrion hesitated.

"I am still very far from the top," he said; "and from perfect Happiness."

"Why," said the other, "you might die before it comes, and all your trouble for nothing! Or it might come only to your old age, after a life of labour. Would one poor year repay you?"

"One moment would repay me," said he; "and the toil itself is happy: and after death the happiness will be eternal."

"Ah, lad," said Lucian, unable to resist his favourite commonplace, "in death your skull and mine, the priest's and the pilot's, will look alike enough! Though," he added, glancing at the boy's plain linen dress, "you will be the happier for having less luggage than I to leave behind you at that Ferry."

"Oh, sir," said Menandrion: "if you see that, why not join with us at once . . . strip yourself, whom death must one day strip, . . ." and he too had his commonplaces.

"But listen," said Lucian. "Were I ready to follow, I still must choose a guide! I have seen many roads and many would-be guides. I am an

Odysseus, many-travelled in mind and body; you were tied to the wrist of one before ever your eyes were opened; you couldn't choose, and can't! The rival masters all profess to teach the divine wisdom, but it seems to me one needs the wisdom at the outset, to know which is the worthiest professor!"

"But Isis—surely there is none like her—so ancient, so pure!"

"Oh, but it's not *you* who must sing me her praises! Do I trust a pedlar's verdict on his own wares? I go to other sources! But I'll grant you this; you've never seen anything better; yes, I grant that."

"There *can't* be anything better."

"Said the untravelled Ethiop, 'there *can't* be white men'."

"But the priests showed me how poor the other religions were," began Menandrion.

"Shadow-fighters, my lad. Or, at best, slayers of their own straw-effigies! The Mithra-man will tell me as bad and worse of you. Am I to let *him* lead me by the nose? I must test each and all for myself, and that takes several lifetimes. You see it can't be done."

"You *needn't* try them all. You know at

once—Oh," cried Menandrion suddenly, delighted at a comparison flashed to him, "we once had a gold cup stolen, and locked the doors, and the first man we searched had it on him! We didn't search the rest! One was enough."

"You're clever at this game," said Lucian, flicked. "But it won't do. You only *recognized* your cup. I've got to *find* truth! I don't know whether I'm after a cup or a saucer, or whether it'll be of gold, or clay, or wood. And suppose I do find this something-or-other, what's the divine mark to prove that it's the real thing?"

"I don't know what to say," the boy answered: "only you know when you've got it, I'm sure."

"Still, you haven't told me how to begin, have you? Why should I tackle one, more than another? Suppose I started with Pythagoras? Well, there's five years of silence to observe, at the outset. A fine thing for a busy man of fifty like me."

"Couldn't you begin with us? One little taste would make you see what it was all worth!"

"Like wine, you mean?" suggested Lucian.

"Yes," said Menandrion, off his guard.

"You take one sip, to test: you don't drink the whole cask, much less all possible casks. But what

a bad comparison of yours," he bullied him. "Not but what priests doctor their stuff and give short measure like any tap-man! Still, you know, the first mouthful's exactly the same in kind as what follows. That's not your experience of religion, is it?"

"No!" cried he, enthusiastic over his theory that made him forget experience. "It gets sweeter and sweeter. It's a new thing every day."

"Exactly. So even if I don't like Pythagoras at first, I can't tell but what it may need just perseverance to find out it's the truth. And it may always be that one has persevered *just not* long enough. Now why did you start with Isis?"

"The goddess chose him from his cradle," said the priest, who had come up softly. "Come, my son: we must first pray, and then you shall sleep."

"But how did he know she chose him?" shouted Lucian coarsely. "And how can I tell whether she's chosen me? And why does she choose one and not another?"

"Not all things may be made known to you, Lucian," said Mithrobeches coldly. There was a *disciplina arcani*, he implied: all manner of cards were up the sacerdotal sleeve.

Lucian was furious.

The wonderful carnation colours in which the sun had steeped the eastern coast, between the darkening sea and sky, had faded, but the night arched high above the waters, and both glowed dimly in the gloom: it was the *nox sublustris* of Horace's untranslatable felicity: night, but free, open, intoxicating with dark fire. Only in the cabin the blackness was thick, and in that blackness Menandrion prayed himself into an excited sleep, shot with nightmare.

. . . . . .

But with the morning, inspiration came, and the early prayers were calmer. Directly Lucian appeared, Menandrion made towards him. The day was already sultry, the coast-line showing dust-coloured between water and sky bleached of colour, it seemed, in the sparkling light.

"I have thought of an answer!" said Menandrion. "Why, *I* am just the only person you *can* trust about Isis! Who can tell what she really is and means except the man who's tried her? Plato says you can only trust the philosopher to tell you whether the pleasure of philosophy is the best of all. Theon told me that."

"Dear, dear," said Lucian. "But that won't help us. Here am I, with roads, north, south,

east, and west, going off all round me; Cybele's client goes down one, Demeter's down another, and philosophers down half a dozen more, and each of these travellers tells me he's reached the Holy City, and had joy of his citizenship. Whom am I to believe?"

"Why won't you believe *me?*"

"Why, I believe you and the rest have seen *a* city, but how do any of you know it's the right one?"

"But I was forgetting," he cried excitedly; "in a sense they all do come to it! There's only one city, but it's so huge that even roads going in opposite directions end by curving round into it. Only walk bravely, and you're bound to come. You can begin where you like."

"But surely the philosophers and the priests fight pretty lustily each for himself? If it doesn't matter which you join, why do they object to your choosing their neighbour's? Surely it's not avarice—or jealousy? Surely not that?"

"It is true that one way is better than another, though all are good. And anyhow, they all join in telling you that through religion and piety alone happiness is reached."

"But, my good friend," Lucian answered, a little sharply; "nobody knows what works of religion

and piety really *are;* the Cyrenaic puts happiness in the indivisible present pleasure: you, I fancy, are far from that."

"Theon used to say that the religions were right, but the philosophies mostly wrong. I think he meant that if you worshipped strenuously, you were always on the right road, but to subject the God to reasoning led astray. Though some philosophers saw that too. Plato was fond of saying, Theon told me, how God was beyond substance and thought and everything human and higher than human, and yet the foundation and source of all the universe."

"You," said Lucian, "are evidently one of these folk who tell us that God is not up in the sky, but in the earth and the stones and the air and everything. There're a lot of people like you. The Stoics have all their rigmarole about God's being the world's Soul, and we his limbs; and Aeschylus said, 'Zeus is the air, Zeus the earth, and Zeus the sky, yea, Zeus is all things, and what is beyond the All'. How can anything be beyond everything? And the Christians, who are a sect of the Jews, and contain different schools mixed with cynic ideas and also Epicurean, had a sacred writing which I saw in Egypt: 'Raise the

stone, and thou shalt find me; cleave the wood and there am I'. And they have all this about being 'partakers of the divine substance'. But the only educated one I ever met, said that it was all to happen in the next world, like your plans for merging into Osiris, and these good Orphics who become Dionysus, as far as I can see. But honestly, isn't it nonsense? You're you and I am I, and we're neither of us gods, and certainly not stones, nor limbs of anything else; and if we were God, where's the use of praying, and what's the good of trying to become what we are already? Let's enjoy our godship, and all the rest of everything, since it's all God."

Menandrion, utterly disheartened and buffeted backwards and forwards by Lucian's facile talk, answered in what he could remember of the old instructions, now so thin, seemingly, and powerless against the cudgelling of logic.

"Sir," he said, "Theon told me many wonderful things, but I feel that what is most wonderful of all, he could not tell me, nor I you, nor could I tell myself. Theon assured me it would be so. Union with God is promised us, but we shall not understand it even when it comes, much less shall we be able to explain it. It is the work of the

soul, not of the intellect or tongue. We cannot say what God *is:* we can only describe what he becomes to us. He is our father and the lord of all, though we can call him by any other name if it seems to us more holy or more religious: and every name we must count holy, for the sake of our understanding. But by none of them do we really state his substance. Speech is necessary between you and me and the rest; thought is necessary for me within myself; and in the word and thought, or through them, or with them, but only so, comes the name of God. I am not telling you this of myself, sir, but quoting what I don't really understand, though it helps me. I have some more in these papers from which I was reading before you came. They are my notes. I think they bear on the way we know the Divine even from the outset, without learning. Listen: 'The innate knowledge about the Gods comes into being together with our very substance; it is above all judgment or choice, it is there before reasoning or proof. From the first it is knit into one with its own cause, and is substantially united with the substantial rush of the soul after the good. And to speak sooth, our knitting-up with the Divine is not *knowledge;* for the knower

is still somehow marked off by otherness from the known. Better is this than the knowledge which is as of one that knows another; self-born, void of distinctions is the simple embrace that clasps God. Or rather does it clasp us, and with it we are filled, yea, and this very existence that is ours we possess precisely in this, that we are knowing God!'"

"Don't pretend you understand all that," said Lucian.

"No," said Menandrion; "I am still in the flesh. But let me read again: 'But a man must seek after his ransom and freeing from his chains. And freedom is precisely the knowing of God. The essence of bliss is this knowledge, even the knowledge of the Father; the essence of woe is all that lures us from his side, forgetfulness of the presubstantial, the self-sufficient Father-God; and the knowledge saves the true life by leading it up unto the Father of life, while the forgetfulness drags down man who might have been lord of being, unto that which is never the same, but is ever fleeting. And only step by step do we advance: to know that we are nothing, turns us to prayers, and thence are we led to him to whom we pray, and by being ever with him, we grow like unto him; and though it can only be for few men,

and that when their sun is low, that their soul will thus speed through all Being and grasp the whole and the Eternal, yet in whatever measure this is ours, we have not only the most blessed consummation of all good, but the very bond of that one-minded love which should be among men.' "

Without a word Lucian turned away.

It was afternoon when Menandrion had read from his papyrus, and only the creaking of the oars was heard, as the small crew laboured in the heat: the pilot whistled from time to time, but the gaiety of morning was gone, and he ceased from his tune, like any bird exhausted by the sun and sleeping against hot rocks till evening. The smell of pitch, bubbling on the ship's sides, of garlic, and sizzling maize-cakes was everywhere. Lucian preferred to assign to these circumstances his immense depression, and to curse the recurrent impecuniosity which drove him, fashionable writer and rhetorician as he was, to travel, at times, with paupers.

But when the evening fell, he became far more honest with himself. He had laughed at the many roads, indistinguishable yet divergent, which led to the heavenly city. But he could not laugh at the vision of that city's self! The memory of

those young dreams returned, distilling his soul's bitterness. The city so different from the many whither he had gone to lecture in his elegant, cold prose of a witty sceptic, where he had tasted the luxuries he craved and scorned, and the poverty he feared for his last days, when the lecture-rooms would be empty, and the brain barren of dainty sophistries, the very blood too dull for the most mechanical riot . . . Had he not once been in the porches of its gates? None, there, were born citizens, but all had right to ultimate citizenship; many a barbarian had found his way into that register, yes, and slaves, and the little people, and the poor, and the ugly; and, in fine, to have one's share in that privilege one had only to will it! For the controllers of *that* record did not make their list on basis of wealth or habit or stature or beauty, or of race and noble ancestry: to win the prize knowledge alone was needed, and desire of noble things, and earnest work, and perseverance not to faint upon the steepness of the road; and, once within the city, man became just "citizen"; better or worse, noble or baseborn, slave or free existed not, nay, were not so much as named among them. . . . The dream floated heavily about him on drooping wings, bringing no new

resolve, offering no grip, even, upon old hopes; Lucian turned to sleep, certain that the future would be as the past, brilliant, corrupt, tasteless.

And to Menandrion the night was no kinder. While he was arguing with Lucian, he had some of the human pleasure of the fight, even when he felt himself a sorry controversialist. But in the close cabin, the transient exaltation left him always more and more depressed, and at times sweating with panic at the sight of abysses, intellectual and of the will, yawning in front of him. He was still on the edge, still balanced, he would not jump; but who could promise that the cliff would not suddenly crumble, and himself be suddenly whirled downwards? Why *had* he joined Isis? committed himself to the life of renunciation? How prove that he had not wholly misinterpreted the sanction he had thought sufficient, the experience of the divine touch? In one curious detail especially he felt all slipping from him. Could he disguise from himself that the impression on initiates came chiefly along of that dim vision of "gods and goddesses" ranged about Isis, musical with sistra, which the sliding panel showed? Yet he knew that it was all the work of the temple-staff, enacting the solemn service

among abrupt effects of lights and darks and sound. He had himself taken part in that miracle-play, and known that through the dark space, where the panel had slid, unseen eyes of the solitary initiate were watching him. It had never struck him as trickery. It was through this ministry of his, after much purification and penance, that, as the priest told him, the goddess willed to reach her new servant. But for that very doctrine, what sanction? Suppose—he could not see why not—there were nothing there, really, except the rhythmic dance, and shifting light and shadow, and exciting tinkle of metal, to move the hysterical spectator? Suppose the flowers, and water-gardens, and prayers and dreams had all been just themselves, not vehicles, holding nothing within or beneath themselves? What was to stop him from the hateful liberty, between himself and which nothing now seemed to lie except an invisible wall of fear; a liberty in which, since he was still a man, body and soul could career through a universe of unimagined sweetnesses? Perhaps just the love for the pure memory of Theon kept him still believing and rigid: certainly he clung passionately to it, his only companion now that Mithrobeches had ceased all practical communica-

tion with him, and was always with Lucian. Indeed, both the rhetorician and the priest had insensibly altered their tone towards the boy and one another. Lucian treated the Isiac as a man of the world, a *farceur* who had no illusions on the character of the gains he made from fools. The priest abandoned his unctuous condescension and restraint; he fed and drank heavily, snubbed Menandrion, and showed a kind of obsequious boisterousness with Lucian.

They were rounding Cnidus when an unexpected end came. The intense sultriness of the weather had long ago reduced Menandrion to great weakness; he could neither eat nor, in the thickness of the night, sleep quietly, even on deck. To-day he was there, half-dozing, half-listening to the talk of Lucian and the priest, as the boom creaked with the drooping sail, and the oars made their steady washing, followed by the quick drip, and plunged again. The priest mentioned the name "Domitian," and Lucian laughed a sneer. Menandrion was at once alert. The Emperor, dead long ago, was a hero of his, had figured in a thrilling tale of Theon's—how, in his boyhood, the young Flavian had escaped, on that dreadful day when the Capitol was ablaze, from the murderous Vitellian

soldiery, disguised as an acolyte of Isis. And on the spot of the miraculous escape, Domitian had afterwards built, in the days of his power, a chapel to the divine Mother. And how noble, Menandrion had thought, must the rest of that exalted life have been: the death, too; a door to the vision of the greater Royalty. . . .

He interrupted with an indignant question. The two men laughed loud. Lucian, in his worst of moods, recklessly retailed in the ears of the horrified boy the vile history of that Court, and the scarcely viler apocrypha of its gossip. Menandrion, unconscious of the sun beating straight upon him, found his attention riveted to a story of which he had never heard the like. Pulses in his temples drummed noisily; his blood seethed. So even Theon had held things from him! And if here he had told the edifying incidents, suppressed the scandalous truth, where else might he not have manipulated facts, have *lied?* The cliff was crumbling. Lucian reeled off the story of that hideous death: the Emperor moved across the field of imagination; the strong man in prime of life, yet with his very flesh crawling at the ghosts of his innumerable murders, and (worse still) at his own reflection, indefinitely multiplied, in the

mirrors with which he had lined chamber and corridor, that death might not come from behind. Worse, surely, than lurking death, was that hunted face, his own, always flushed, forehead already bald and wrinkled? And on the last day, when the fifth hour came for which his fate had been prophesied, and when the servants (at his own bidding, and not really deceiving him) had announced that the *sixth* was passing, he had entered the fatal bedroom,—and in a moment Menandrion could watch the assassination, the Lord God rolling on the floor in death-struggle with the freedman, strangling his throat, shrieking, thrusting thin fingers into eyesockets, but with the blood still spurting, still dripping, as it seemed, from roof and walls where in the looking-glasses the ghastly wrestling reproduced itself.

Menandrion, in spite of the roaring in his head, heard every syllable. Or rather he watched the story; the florid Lucian and the linen-clad priest, veiled to his eyes in a dull red mist, seemed reeling and turning in the mirror-room, Emperor and freedman writhing in a withering heat.

"See, Mithrobeches," cried Lucian, "what will come to you and your pretty lad if you don't keep to the laws and love of the Immaculate!"

"Keep to them?" said the priest, brutally, "but what man does? I'm man, too," he quoted, prostituting the beautiful line, already famous, "'Nothing human comes amiss to me'."

The two men broke into a roar of laughter.

To Menandrion, their figures appeared suddenly to shoot up, in the crackling of the laughter, and blind the sun. A mallet seemed to smash down upon his skull. Even in the incredibly quick coming of the sunstroke, he had time to think, first, that the mast had fallen on his head; then, that the deck had split, and he was pitching downwards into dark.

Then he passed, through a black heat, into complete unconsciousness.

III.

"I saw that every morning, far withdrawn
Beyond the darkness and the cataract,
God made Himself an awful rose of dawn."

When Menandrion regained full consciousness after his sunstroke, he found himself in a small bedroom, the window of which looked out upon sea.

During the long delirium, when he was aware of himself at all, he had felt, as it were, all brain,

and wrapped in a sticky and stifling blackness; across a wave of sickly light the face of Lucian had seemed, from time to time, to slide. And now that it was the body that seemed leaden, and the head extraordinarily light and clear, as if washed by pure, cool water bubbling with brilliancy, still was it Lucian, sitting by the window, that made the first impression on Menandrion.

Half-disgusted with his own sentiment, yet sorry for the smashing blow which had fallen on the lad, and which he had occasioned, Lucian had seen for a moment that when a man sets out to destroy, he cannot always regulate the kind of ruin he achieves; and when, on the night of the catastrophe, he had stumbled upon the priest lying drunk across the cabin steps, he had, by an impulse of real generosity, disembarked at Miletus with the unconscious boy, determined to see him through his illness before continuing his own journey, or at all events to deliver him from the care of Mithrobeches.

Menandrion did indeed make a quick but partial recovery. The cure affected the body, but somehow at first failed to reach the soul. Perhaps a modification of the brain tissue brought it about that though reasoning power survived, spiritual

perception, if we may so call it, seemed killed. The death of this power was revealed chiefly by the corresponding death of the *soul* in all external things; for, in its reaction upon this, the noblest spiritual activity had proved its own existence. As he grew stronger, Menandrion could watch the waves—sapphire, here too, with spray of diamonds—and the flowers and butterflies, and could draw great breaths of air in which sunlight danced. But colour and motion and light brought nothing with them: they remained noticeable facts, not much preferable to their absence; certainly not suggestive of a further reality to be sought, seized, and rejoiced in. And, still more deadening, no *thought* brought meaning with it: when at last he could read, words and prayers—so sublime of old, and bringing about his soul that silence and aloofness in which took place things diviner still than prayer—became now just arrangements of symbols for eye and brain, falling into coherent wholes like glass in a kaleidoscope, but in no sense alive, or akin to his living soul, and demanding recognition. He did not feel sorry at this: he experienced a vague politeness, as it were, to these exterior facts, a willingness to attend to them when he was not too tired, but he owned to no

personal relation due to them. In the same way he felt no longer any repulsion for Lucian, thinking coldly at times, no doubt, that he was coarse and rather unintelligible, but agreeing that it was suitable he should remain with him, as Lucian had suggested; and realizing that refusal would be not only churlish, but suicidal in his desolate poverty. For the one thought he would never admit was that of a return to the old life of an Isiac, at Smyrna or elsewhere. That the soul was really not dead was proved by its agonized reaction to this one stimulus. Lucian had been terrified by one violent attack of hysteria occasioned by his suggesting a return to Theon's temple; and the doctor had asserted that a relapse would definitely unbalance the boy's brain. But, in the curious airiness of head which Menandrion was now experiencing, he had no difficulty in turning his thoughts from any subject, from the religious aspect of the past or of his prospects, and the subject dropped.

But Lucian was burning to go on to Paphlagonia, where the doings of the mysterious Alexander were growing daily in notoriety. As he took Menandrion by easy stages northward, he related to him what information he had collected;

and though the mention of Alexander seemed to provoke him to unusual violence and vulgarity —Menandrion wondered why anger should make Lucian coarsely talkative: in the old days, when he had felt it, indignation had only made him the more silent—he seemed to have extracted the facts with sufficient accuracy.

"You will excuse my mentioning these things to an educated person like yourself," said Lucian, airily, and addressing in reality the imagined audience always around him, "but you may as well know what an Augean stable it is we have to sluice." And he developed the metaphor. . . . Then, "I shall write a few pages on the matter—not that the man deserves it; tearing in pieces by dogs and apes in the theatre, that's the proper advertisement for him! Well, a regular pest, he was; even as a brat: he toured as accomplice with a conjurer, and engineered the mystifications. Then he went into partnership with a Byzantine trickster called Kokkonas, and when they saw that touring didn't really pay, they pitched on Paphlagonia, a place packed with fools, fatheads, and pious plutocrats," said Lucian explosively, "people who stare and gape at any one who comes along with a flute or a drum or a pair of cymbals, and fall

down and worship him. So they discovered (that's their way of putting it) a bronze tablet in the temple at Chalcedon, saying that Apollo and his son Asklepios were to take possession of the town Abonoteichus. Well, this got noised about, and when Alexander reached the place, would you believe it, he found a temple started, and the foundations laid, for 'the God who was to Come'! Just then Kokkonas died, and so he had the field to himself. So one day he came leaping naked into the market-place, shouting and tossing his hair, and sprang on to a platform and yelled out, 'O blessed city, so soon to receive the God made manifest'. And he poured out a jargon of Hebrew and Phœnician, and called on Apollo and Asklepios. Then off he dashes to the new buildings, jumps into a pool of rain-water, fishes out an egg, cracks it, and out wriggles a little snake! Asklepios! what more do you want? Asklepios the twice-born! Of course you follow me," said Lucian sharply to Menandrion: "He blew a goose's egg, put the beast in, pasted it up, and buried it the night before?"

Menandrion nodded.

"Then he produced, in a few days, a bigger snake which he said was the god grown full-size; this I

believe gives oracles: you don't know how much to credit. There's no doubt people hand him in papers, sealed and tied, and he returns them intact with the proper answer appended. I'll settle him, gods! Or he sleeps on the notes, and dreams the answer. He's tricked the whole Empire: he's stormed the Capitol. There's that purple old fool of a senator, Rutillianus, who's practically thrown up all his official positions to marry the fellow's daughter—daughter of Alexander and the Moon, so please you, who fell in love with the prophet on her own account. It's rather a way she's got. . . . And in the big plague he sent round a charm: 'Phœbus unshorn of lock shall 'fend the cloud of plague'. And by a pretty chance, just those houses which put it on their door-posts came off worst. No doubt they thought that the hairy Phœbus would shoot away the pest, and so neglected ordinary precautions. Serve 'em right."

As they approached Abonoteichus, the signs of the prevalent cult became frequent. Shrines and street-corner statues showed the snake-god, with his name, Glykon, engraved above. Bodies of pilgrims were met, singing hymns, and in much excitement—brains and hearts, as Lucian said, rather mixing his metaphors, in such a simmering

that they weren't like meat-eating mortals any more, but silly sheep, all of 'em, except to look at. Things had changed since the old days when Alexander sat in his little two-doored hut, trusting to the gloom to pass off his *mise-en-scène*, while the stream of peasants was hurried in by one door and out on the other side. Alexander lived now in the completed temple, and there, on the first day, the travellers twice had a glimpse of him. Once, within the shrine, the folding doors were flung wide, and the tall figure of the prophet, clothed in purple and white, with a white cloak, hair and beard shaggy upon breast and shoulders, was seen behind a barrier. Writhing round neck and arms was visible the body of a large snake; the head was concealed beneath the draperies. Just as Menandrion was leaving, a howl from the sweating, struggling mob made him look back. From beneath the prophet's beard a monstrous head protruded, a snake's head, yet with a hideous likeness to humanity; its mouth opened and shut; a forked tongue flickered. A mellow voice chanted a phrase, though the prophet's lips never moved. But in the general hubbub, Menandrion missed the words.

That night a bewildering spectacle was wit-

nessed. A ceremony of initiation, modelled, in its main lines, on that at Eleusis, was begun in the temple precincts. It lasted three days. A proclamation preceded it: "If any Atheist or Epicurean or Christian be come to spy on our mysteries, let him begone: but let the faithful of our God receive the rite with all good luck." The orthodox "expulsion" then took place. Alexander advanced shouting, "Out with the Christians"; the crowd answered, with a yell, "Out with the Epicureans". "He hates the Epicureans," explained Lucian, "because they're sensible people and show him up: he burnt all Epicurus's books the other day in the market. And he hates the Christians because they won't come to him, though they're as simple a set as any of these Paphlagonian snivellers."

"Why won't they come to him?" said Menandrion.

"Because they've a rival magician of their own, who was impaled in Palestine some time ago for heading an insurrection against the Jews, who were in a sort of permanent insurrection against everybody else. They're a morose set, but you can easily take 'em in by saying you want to learn their religion. I've done it."

A series of mythological dramas followed, acted in the symbolical style of the times. On the first day scenes connected with Apollo and Asklepios were shown: on the second, the birth and epiphany of Glykon: on the third, the history (revised) of Alexander, including his marriage with the Moon, who descended by a rope from the temple roof.

Before the display was over, Menandrion, overcome by the shouts of "Hail, Alexander!" reiterated by a reeling and leaping crowd, redolent of garlic, had fainted, and Lucian had him taken back to their mean lodging. There for four days he nursed him, without, however, forgetting Alexander.

He sent, by his servant, several questions to the shrine, fastening his letter so that by no trick could it be opened, while he explained to Menandrion the various devices by which seals could be circumvented and knots defied. His questions were absurd: "Doesn't Alexander wear a wig?" To which the prophet, unable to open the note, replied in terms of sheer nonsense. In two other papers an identical question was contained,—"Where did Homer come from?"—but the slave, coached in his part, made believe to yield to the

innocent-seeming questions of Alexander, and divulged that the first petition turned on the cure of a pleurisy, the second referred to the manner of making a projected journey into Italy. So Lucian received two answers, the first being compact of common-sense and witch-wisdom alliteratively set forth: "Plaster apply to Place and Speed-horse Spittle". The second was: "Go not by Sea but go on Foot by Road," which had at least the quality, unusual in oracles, of perspicuity. And again Lucian enclosed an identical question in eight packets, sending with these the price of eight oracles, at one drachma two obols apiece. Eight separate answers reached Lucian, having nothing to do, he declared, with anything in heaven or earth, and least of all with the question, which was, "When shall Alexander be proved a charlatan?"

No doubt rumours of this sort of fooling got about; certainly Alexander grew suspicious. He had too many accomplices ever to feel really safe: a whole staff had been organized: interpreters, to read and answer foreign letters; spies in big towns, most of all in Rome, to carry rapid information, to spread rumours, to detect probable inquiries, to explain answers. And indeed some

answers needed revision; they obtained it, too, in the authorized edition of the Oracles. There was the unfortunate incident of Severianus's Armenian expedition; and the disastrous results of Marcus Aurelius's expedition against the Marcomani and the Quadi, which Alexander had favoured. Still, he had protected himself by enlisting the favour of the old-established shrines, sending to them clients who had applied to himself. He kept back letters containing compromising questions from influential personages who saw now, helplessly, that they had committed themselves irretrievably, and were at the mercy of the blackmail of one whom they could never denounce as the unscrupulous fraud they realized him to be. His prayers were valued: Apollo refused oracles till his spokesman should have begged the favour: he prayed, and miracles broke out: diseases were cured, the dead raised more than once. He was able to satisfy a caviller who asked if the new-born Asklepius was the same as the old, by saying that it was a mystery: he hinted at a journey into the Far East. "They too," said he, "must profit by my sojourn upon the earth."

A grotesque incident made an end of all this for Menandrion. He was in the temple, one day,

watching Alexander offering the serpent to be touched, and his own hand to be kissed, when he noticed Lucian standing by the barrier, and felt his blood chilled by the concentrated malevolence venomous in the man's face. Lucian put himself among the devotees and advanced to do homage. Alexander reached out his hand. There was a sudden yell, and a wild confusion, in which the prophet and Lucian, who was crouching to the level of Alexander's hand, appeared to be wrestling violently, while the snake's body, flung this way and that, lashed the walls and floor. Lucian had seized the forefinger of the outstretched hand between his teeth, which had fastened to it like a steel trap, almost biting it through. Menandrion uttered a scream of hysterical laughter. At once recognized as Lucian's squire, the crowd closed in around him, and among the howls of "Death to the Epicureans!" "Death to the Christians!" he was dragged outside, still screaming with laughter. A stone, suddenly striking his ankle, caused so acute a revulsion of agony that he fainted again, feeling himself almost torn limb from limb.

. . . . . .

When Menandrion thus for the third time had

to struggle back to life, he found himself in a garret lit only by a tiny lamp. A man of the merchant class, apparently, was sitting at his side watching him. Suddenly conscious that here was another rough shock, another change for the existence he had hoped would be so peaceful and simple, Menandrion, feeling very weak and quite helpless, began to cry.

"Quiet, quiet," said the man, taking his hand. "You are safe now."

"I am very tired," said Menandrion. "I am very unhappy."

The man lifted him up till the boy's head rested on his shoulder.

"Drink this, and then go to sleep," said he, putting a cup to his lips, and speaking simply to him, as to a baby; "go to sleep, in the love and companionship of God."

Menandrion turned his head till his face crushed hard against the man's chest, and he pressed his arms round his shoulders.

"Oh," he wailed, "for the love of the gods, take care of me; don't send me away; I am all alone."

His whole body shook with sobs.

"Quiet, quiet," said the man once more. "I am here, and God is not absent."

But the next day, he was able to tell Menandrion what had happened. They were both in hiding, it seemed; for the riot, begun in the temple, had extended to the whole town, and Epicureans and Christians had to hide from the mob. He was a Christian, and named Bacchylides: he had only just managed to escape with the unconscious boy, who had been dragged from beneath the very feet of the crowd; the people had forgotten him directly he had fallen unconscious, and had made with one accord at Lucian. Menandrion had been smuggled into a wine-shop kept by a friend of Bacchylides, but not himself a Christian, and therefore unsuspected of harbouring atheists. Here man and boy lurked for at least a week, while the persecution raged furiously through the neighbourhood and then as suddenly disappeared. But Lucian, unconscious, too, owing to a blow on the head dealt by Alexander himself, had been rescued by the two mace-bearers whom the Government had just allotted to him, and was by them hurried rapidly down to the shore and put on board the State boat, which had immediately sailed, no one exactly knew whither.

"I can inquire, Menandrion, if you like," added Bacchylides. "Probably he has gone to Nicomedia

or Chalcedon: the Governor is there just now. But one can't be sure."

Menandrion showed no desire whatever of seeing Lucian again, and it cannot be said that Bacchylides was anxious to bring about the meeting.

But Menandrion, on learning that the merchant was a Christian, had felt his gratitude die. Apathetic after the first stroke of his calamity, save under the violent stimulus of a suggested return to the religious life, he had by now regained sufficient tone habitually to suffer if the source of his sorrows, as he deemed it, were put, however generally, before him. And this was the soul, the fundamental mystery in man, which exhaled this passion for the gods as a marsh exhales miasma: a passion which condensed into religions and rituals, even as vague mists canopied those marshes, pestilent and malodorous, and everywhere, at all times, detestable. Still, he had to own himself once more dependent, and knew not where to look when Bacchylides pointed out that a longer stay at Abonoteichûs was impossible. Apart from the risk and unwholesomeness of hiding, it was unfair to the inn-keeper, who was, after all, not a Christian, and could not finally avoid suspicion. And though the danger was now practically past, and the Paph-

lagonian Church would willingly have given alms and shelter to a fellow-sufferer, even though not of the "household," yet it seemed better not to trespass too long on the poverty of these farmers and sailors, but to remove altogether beyond the zone of disturbance.

"But I have no home," said Menandrion.

"You shall come with me to Mycalé," had answered the Christian.

"Is that your home?" asked the boy with half-conscious envy.

"My old mother lives there," said he; "I have a little lodging in Miletus."

"Oh," cried the poor lad, quite suddenly bursting into tears; "why have I never had a mother?" And the stifled love of babyhood awoke, clamorous. The hunger for the complex, sacred relationship, for the playful surprises, the secrets, for the countless little human incidents of mutual love and tendance made divine by the soul which exists nowhere except in that intercommunion of motherhood and sonship, gnawed dreadfully at his heart. The offer of any diviner motherhood, that of the invisible Isis for instance, had it perchance suggested itself, would have seemed an insult. That old dream, only the worse for its beauty, was

done with. That it alone had filled all his past, was irrelevant, though of appalling sorrowfulness. Henceforward, according to his level of physical vitality at the moment, he oscillated between bitterness and dreary hopelessness; rage at a life already a failure, already stultified; misery over the past, empty of the one fact, for ever irrecoverable, which had given it a meaning; and over the future, sure to be racked by the desires which essentially could not be appeased.

Just now he cried passionately, with sobs, like a child. There was much in him of arrested development. Only of late had the intelligence, energizing hitherto in a restrained circle of mystical theorems, been abruptly developed, in as narrow a region, however, of destructive logic, by Lucian. He alternately accepted and rejected the proposal that he should live at Mycalé. What could he do? he knew no trade: he would simply be a burden. Bacchylides had tried to quiet him: who knew, indeed, what God might not intend for Menandrion, as a guide and leader, elect from boyhood, in the pure religion? And the Christian had a vision of the lad, linen-clad once more, bearing to a crowd of worshippers white bread,

and a mysterious cup, while there descended a space of silence and of Heaven.

But Menandrion here violently repulsed him. He had had enough of that. At least no more prayer! no more worship! Bacchylides must only hope to have him on condition of never mentioning that cult. It made him almost loathe his rescuer when he remembered it. And he kept obstinate silence when Bacchylides, for the first time, suggested the credentials of the Christian faith. Of the "mighty works" he would have nothing. He had seen enough of miracles, healings, visions, to make him hate all reference to them; as he already hated the cults which they adorned. Every religion vaunted its preternatural assets, and was a lie in proportion as these claimed to be numerous or startling. It was the devil, Bacchylides had been reduced to argue, who imitated the Christian miracles. Menandrion shrugged his shoulders. Without formulating his thoughts, he felt that the ultimate fact of Evil Will, named Set by Egypt, and "Satan," Bacchylides said, by Christianity, was at least more reasonably treated by a propitiatory worship than by a resistance surely doomed to defeat. And anyhow, to believe that Christianity was divine because of its

miracles, and that their like, elsewhere verified, were diabolic imitations, implied a vicious circle. The argument held only for one already a Christian. Even the prophecies on which Bacchylides ultimately relied were only irritation to him. Lucian had trained him to cavil cleverly at the oracular: a prophecy could be made to mean anything *après coup*; forgery was not unknown; contradictions were numberless.

So Bacchylides was driven back to the taking of the great risk, of throwing his whole weight on the power of the unseen to make itself evident to the soul: not what he could say of or for Christ should quell Menandrion; but Christ Himself, living in His follower, should so woo that soul that neither its history of sharp tempest after a perhaps delusive calm, nor its present experience of a force centrifugal from Christ, should be able to defeat the divine solicitation. Only (and the thought brought him to his knees in a humility, an awe, untasted while, as hitherto, he had thought but of his own soul), what must be *his* life, *his* emptying of himself, if, for Menandrion, to meet *him* was to be the equivalent of meeting Christ; if only in *his* person contact with the Divine Personality was to be established!

Nor dare we deny that it was precisely the conflict between this magnetism of the King and Centre of all hearts, and the centrifugal force still mysterious in man and in the universe, which so racked Menandrion that after a few months spent in the farm on Mycalé he was reduced to the very brink of despair. He could never have described, still less have explained, that despair. That the fascination of Jesus had reached him, and that there was a something in him which cowered from it in horror, he could not have guessed. He never suspected that his shrinking from Bacchylides himself was due simply to the fact that through him the attraction acted on his heart. At times, when that attraction was strong, he not only feared, but hated the Christian. Rather was he right (if he was indeed resolved upon resistance), to hate and fight *himself*, since in the very pulp and fibre of his soul, was a quality, God-given, which was unintelligible, save in its response to that Divine activity its existence postulated. Years afterwards, Menandrion saw that even then in that subconscious self a divine battle had raged, which could only be quieted into the Sabbath-rest of faith, or the eternal silence of spiritual death. For, one spring night, he climbed the rocky pro-

montory, and, leaning against a little shrine of Isis, crumbling and defaced by the weather, he watched the sky and sea: to these simple terms had the question resolved itself; could he go back to live in that house where souls were on the rack; or should he not end all problems together, by an easy leap over the dark precipice at his feet?

Through the night, which so simply might be made unending, rose the murmur of the Mediterranean, swaying vaguely without tide, hundreds of feet below. Even that sound might so easily be stilled!

But, as he sat there in the dark, there came to him an initiation unasked, save by mute suffering; unchecked, save by the appreciation of an ecstasy; not to be recaptured, later, by memory, save as a fact the intellectual or emotional reproduction of which seemed so barren, so common, that its value appeared as trivial as its immediate result.

After two long hours, in which Menandrion remained fixed in a barely conscious introspection of the meaningless and brutal aching of his soul, it became quite suddenly impossible to remain within the boundaries of himself, his fears and sorrows and decisions. Abandoning himself to powers greater than his own, he passed very rapidly

through three stages of a swift soul-journey. First, he became suddenly awake to the immensity of the facts and forces round him: the giant air went freely in vast currents, none knew whence or whither, under the sky, and over a sea itself driven, huge masses of deep water, resistlessly round islands, deluging the inlets, stopped only by this coast heaved upwards into impregnable fastnesses, rocks indomitable as the sea itself. Stars, incredibly distant, appeared at times from behind the voyaging clouds. So helpless, he sat there! So tiny, so motherless! But the sharp point of the pain had long ago worn itself away against his heart, and he was aware only of the infinite heavy loneliness. Yet, doubtless because that night, as are all hours of day and dark and twilight, was filled with the brooding wings of the Spirit who creates in love and orders to perfection, the sense of isolated hugenesses fell rapidly into the recognition of one vast force beneath the many; and this knowledge grew so swiftly that at once all that had seemed so great hurried towards nothingness: a Reality englobed the world as of one that might measure the waters in the hollow of his hand, and mete out the heavens with a span, and weigh the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance, and take up

the isles as a very little thing. The universe, and himself within it, seemed therefore to Menandrion to dwindle so rapidly that there was nothing to prevent its vanishing altogether, like a mist or a dream, before the face of this Ultimate and Absolute external to itself. And it was just as his spirit shrivelled and fainted in that race towards annihilation that it was abruptly rescued into a third condition, a resurrection into permanence and substantial life.

For that was not all! There was not merely the Infinite, on the one side, and on the other this vanishing wraith of a universe! Do what he would, he could not strangle the assurance, that in one will-made whole, God reached to that poor finitude; God was never aloof, but shepherded the centrifugal chaos, giving it value and consistency by holding it into His own heart, loving it, nursing it, and, as part of it, Menandrion. Never again could it crush him by its greatness, for God was its Father and Mother, and the world His little child; nor horrify him by its vanishing smallness, for God loved it; it could not lose its sonship, nor be orphaned of that immortal care. He withdrew then into God, and silence, better than in the old days, formed about him. For not

needing now to leave the universe to find the divine, he took it with him, being brother of it all, into the centre of the divine encirclement. Rejecting nothing, denying nothing, save in its naked selfhood which could not, indeed, any longer offer itself to his attention, his heart expanded, triumphant, in the love of this Holy Family. Gasping, as it were, with happiness, he sat there in God's lap, and his Father exulted in him, and he was content wholly with his Father. Then the new life sank below the surface, and hid itself in an unknown secret of his soul, till, in its proper season, it should rise and flood him round about and make one ocean with its source, and in its bosom carry Menandrion home.

But as he sat, the sun began very rapidly to rise. Before the sea could escape from the great shadow of Mycalé, the sky, much clearer now of clouds, glowed into the deep blue of daybreak, a blue distant beyond a veil of gold drawn by the level light. First at the horizon the sea became alive, deep purple with grey shadows, wrinkled and crawling, and then lilac, violet, blue. Innumerable islets stood out: Patmos, a pink cloud on the sky-line; Leros, and nearer islands, pulsating with the flaming glories of rose and of carna-

tion; close to the right, the great ridge of Samos, edgeways to the sun, folded of splendour and of shadow. At the near left, the valley of Meander ran backwards into golden mist. And always as the rays struck the rocks, from ledge after ledge rose flights of sea-birds, wheeling and screaming in the keen and brilliant air. Over all sea and land, the colours flamed from harmony into harmony of a great triumph hymn, throbbing in the heart of living flowers and jewels that were the islands, furnaces of ruby, topaz, beryl, and fretted gold, at whose feet the Mediterranean foamed too into music. The world witnessed to the Hebrew promise fulfilled: "Oh thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted; behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires".

And so Menandrion arose from beside the little crumbling shrine, itself gilded and alive with the new light.

"I will go back and live with the Christian," said he.[1]

[1] "And in this he shewed a little thing, the quantitie of a *Hasel-Nutt*, lying in the palme of my hand, as me seemed, and it was round as a Ball. I looked thereon, and thought, *What may this be?* and it was answered

NOTE.—The account of the later Isiac worship in the first chapter of "God's Orphan" is mainly from Plutarch's "De Iside et Osiride"; Apuleius's "Metamorph." x.; Aristid. "De Or. Sacr." VIII. 53. The advice given to Menandrion, his prayers and meditations in this chapter, are translated from Apuleius, with very slight adaptation, resorted to in order to preserve the spirit of the original. Some apology may be needed for putting into his mouth (in Chapter II) words from Iamblichus; but we do not think that anything has been quoted that was not substantially being said in certain circles of Egyptian devotees in his own time. The view taken of Lucian is, we believe, his own, and may best be justified by his Dialogue "Hermotimus". The conclusion to his adventure has here been slightly manipulated, but he failed, in the end, to expose Alexander. The prophet reached such a pitch of insolence that he petitioned the Emperor that the name of Abonoteichus might be changed and a new coinage struck in his and Glykon's honour. He died miserably of a gangrened wound, and, says Lucian viciously, when they bathed his forehead during the fever, it turned out that he *did* wear a wig, and was in reality bald. All of which, says he, is enough to tempt one to believe in a divine providence.

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generallie thus. *It is all that is made.* I marvelled how it might last. For methought it might sodenlie have fallen to naught for litleness. And I was answered in my understanding, *It lasteth and ever shall, for God loveth it. And so hath all thing being by the love of God.*" (Juliana of Norwich, c. 5.)

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